

## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



1

### Gold Ear Ornament or Pendant, Sumba, Nusa Tenggara Islands, Indonesia

Estimate: 3,000 - 5,000 USD

☐ No Reserves

**DESCRIPTION**

Gold Ear Ornament or Pendant, Sumba, Nusa Tenggara  
Islands, Indonesia

*mamuli*

Height: 3  $\frac{3}{8}$  in (8.6 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

American Private Collection

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<https://www.sothebys.com/en/buy/auction/2022/art-of-africa-oceania-and-the-americas/gold-ear-ornament-or-pendant-sumba-nusa-tenggara>



## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



Sculpture from an Important European Private Collection

2

### Gold Alloy Pectoral, Sumba, Nusa Tenggara Islands, Indonesia

Estimate: 4,000 - 6,000 USD

**DESCRIPTION**

Sculpture from an Important European Private Collection

Gold Alloy Pectoral, Sumba, Nusa Tenggara Islands, Indonesia

*Marangga*

Width: 14 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in (36.5 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

European Private Collection

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## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



Pre-Columbian Sculpture from an Important European Private Collection

3

### Coclé Gold Double Pendant of Musicians, circa AD 800-1500

Estimate: 15,000 - 25,000 USD

**DESCRIPTION**

Pre-Columbian Sculpture from an Important European Private Collection

Coclé Gold Double Pendant of Musicians  
circa AD 800-1500

Width: 3 ¼ in (8.3 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

Malcolm Delacorte, Cornwall, New York  
European Private Collection, acquired from the above on May  
8, 1981  
Thence by descent

**CATALOGUE NOTE**

Identical double figures are a classic genre of Isthmus goldwork, seen in Diquís, Veraguas and Coclé figures. The two-figure pendant form may allude to ancestor lineage or the importance of duality respected in all living things. Jones notes that dual images of either paired figures or single figures with two heads are associated with musical iconography (Julie Jones, ed., *The Art of Precolumbian Gold: The Jan Mitchell Collection*, New York, 1985, p. 102).

These ceremonial figures prominently hold conical instruments to their mouths, the deep forms perhaps once inlaid. They each grasp trapezoidal staffs with their slender arms. With coffee-bean-style eyes emitting a trance-like effect, they appear deeply engaged in the ritual. Their naked youthful torsos are finely cast to show musculature and are adorned with serrated flanges from the waistbands and crested headdresses. Each figure has double suspension loops on the back.

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## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



Pre-Columbian Sculpture from an Important European Private Collection

4

### Diquís Gold Pendant of Double Figures with Dangles, circa AD 800-1500

Estimate: 15,000 - 20,000 USD

**DESCRIPTION**

Pre-Columbian Sculpture from an Important European Private Collection

Diquís Gold Pendant of Double Figures with Dangles  
circa AD 800-1500

Width: 3 ¾ in (8.6 cm); Height: 2 ½ in ( 6.3 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

Robert Vergnes, Paris  
European Private Collection, acquired from the above in 1982  
Thence by descent

**CATALOGUE NOTE**

The twin figures stand side by side with arms bent to the side and holding the braided vertical bands, perhaps representing serpents or snakes. The figures are within the broad horizontal bands top and bottom, a style typical of certain Diquís pendants. The nine rectangular dangles projecting forward partially obscure the figures for a mysterious effect, as the figures most likely represent deceased warriors or ancestors by their openwork limbs and bodies and large circular pierced eyes. They are adorned solely by a braided headband and waistband.

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## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



Pre-Columbian Sculpture from an Important European Private Collection

5

### Veraguas Gold Avian Pendant, circa AD 800-1500

Estimate: 7,000 - 10,000 USD

**DESCRIPTION**

Pre-Columbian Sculpture from an Important European Private Collection

Veraguas Gold Avian Pendant  
circa AD 800-1500

Width: 5 7/8 in (14.9cm)

**PROVENANCE**

André Emmerich, New York (inv. no. CB 277)  
Sotheby Parke Bernet, New York, May 12, 1979, lot 280,  
consigned by the above  
European Private Collection, acquired at the above auction  
Thence by descent

**CATALOGUE NOTE**

With the large outspread tail and wings and taloned feet curled tightly to the rounded chest, this bird pendant is the epitome of the flying raptor style. The lower edges of the wings are trimmed by a thin braided band in contrast to the broad smooth planes of the wings and tail. The neck is adorned with multiple bands and the long slender beak tapers downward. A suspension loop is at the back of the neck.

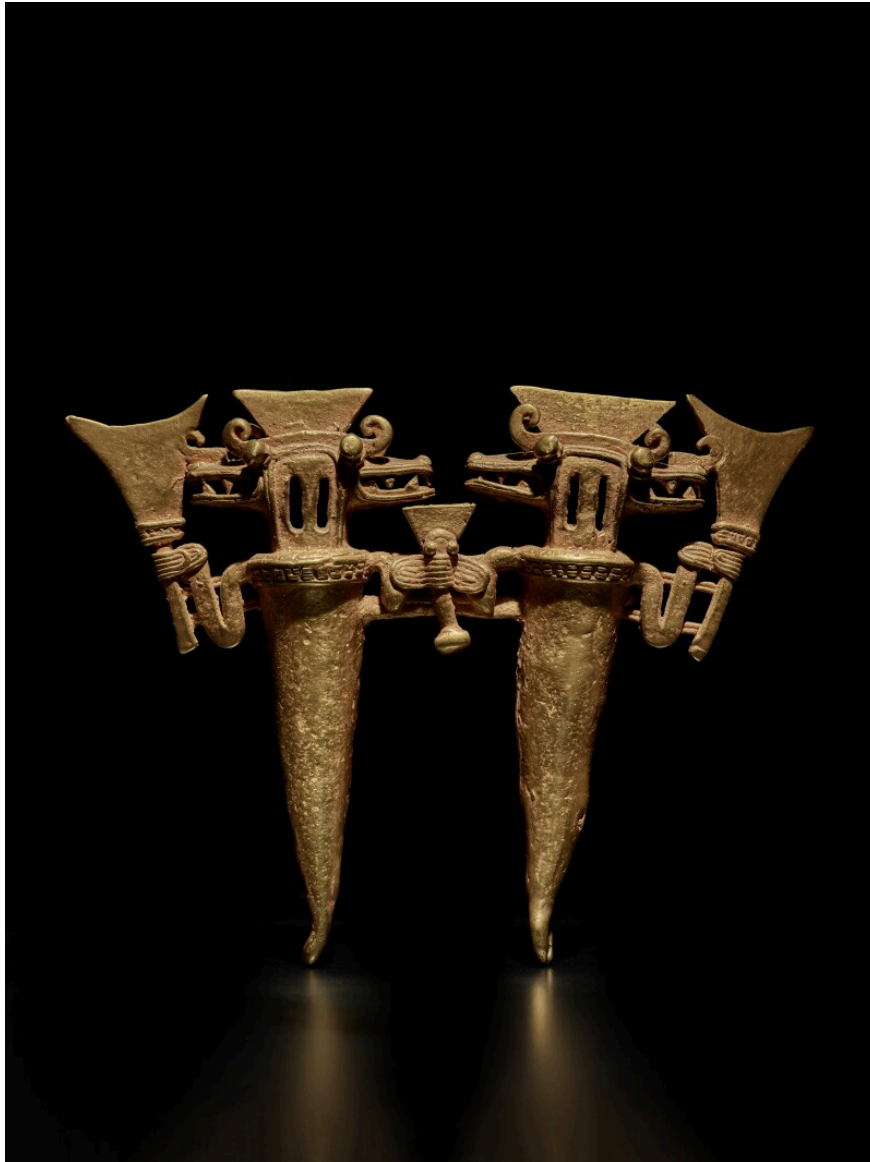
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## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



Pre-Columbian Sculpture from an Important European Private Collection

6

### Coclé Gold Double Figural Pendant with Staffs, circa AD 800-1500

Estimate: 15,000 - 25,000 USD



**DESCRIPTION**

Pre-Columbian Sculpture from an Important European Private Collection

Coclé Gold Double Figural Pendant with Staffs  
circa AD 800-1500

Width: 5 in (12.7 cm); Height: 3 ¾ in (9.5 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

André Emmerich, New York (inv. no. CF9)  
Gimpel-Hanover & André Emmerich Galerien, Zürich  
European Private Collection, acquired from the above on  
November 14, 1980  
Thence by descent

**CATALOGUE NOTE**

Referred to as the "Twin War God" pendant by André Emmerich, this densely cast and dramatic pendant emulates a fierce and powerful aura. The conjoined stylized alligator figures have distinctive tapered bodies ending in slender loops. The sharply turned addorsed heads each show the detailed openwork mouth of rows of triangular teeth, projecting eyes on each side of the squared snouts, and are surmounted by short upcurled scrolls. The inner arms share holding an effigy scepter and each outer arm is holding a weapon or staff with a large trapezoidal blade. Across each of the figure's chest is a narrow band of braided design. There are two suspension loops on the reverse.

The sharp profile saurian head is a feature often painted on ceramics of highly animated alligator-headed figures. For a gold double figural pendant holding staffs with tapered tusk-like bodies, see Samuel Kirkland Lothrop, *Archaeology of Southern Veraguas, Panama*, Cambridge, 1950, p. 67, fig. 105a.

The combination of animal and human creatures is one of the key traits of Central American goldwork. Cooke and Bray aptly refer to the numerous identities of the figural ornaments. "Customarily referred to as gods, they are more reasonably interpreted as tribal man-animal culture heroes, mythical warriors, eponymous clan markers or alter egos." (Richard G. Cooke and Warwick Bray, "The Goldwork of Panama: An Iconographic and Chronological Perspective", in Julie Jones, ed., *The Art of Precolumbian Gold: The Jan Mitchell Collection*, New York, 1985, p. 35).

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## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



Pre-Columbian Sculpture from an Important European Private Collection

7

### Large Sinú Gold Finial of a Bird, circa AD 500-100

Estimate: 30,000 - 50,000 USD

**DESCRIPTION**

Pre-Columbian Sculpture from an Important European Private Collection

Large Sinú Gold Finial of a Bird  
circa AD 500-100

Height: 5 ½ in (14 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

Paul Tishman, New York, acquired before 1967  
European Private Collection, acquired from the above on  
January 20, 1980  
Thence by descent

**CATALOGUE NOTE**

Sinú finials were prominent ornaments for important staffs or scepters. They were cast with naturalistic images of key fauna and fowl of the region that represented different levels of the universe.

This is a particularly large and densely cast finial of a proud avian, likely an owl, distinguished by the broad lunate head trimmed by spirals, long neck, and the teardrop-shaped body marked by three rows of openwork circles separated by faux filigree braided bands. The braided bands are a featured trait of Sinú finials, here marking the sharply recurved beak and encircling the eyes, trimming the bird's legs and the back of the cylindrical shaft. The delicate loop at the tip of the beak is a typical feature of the finials, indicating the possible further adornment by a perishable object.

Sinú art is part of the greater Zenu region which encompasses the Sinú, San Jorge, Nechi, and lower Cauca river valleys. The Spaniards noted the quality and quantity of the goldwork made in this region, which was traded over a wide area. Bray quotes the 16th c. account of Juan de Castellanos (1589); Sinú goldsmiths made "figurines of various kinds, aquatic creatures, land animals and birds, ...also javelins with hoops of gold of various sizes, ...and models of flies, spiders, and other unpleasant insects." (Warwick Bray, *The Gold of Eldorado*, London, 1978, p. 41).

For examples of avian finials, see Ana Maria Falchetti, *El oro del Gran Zenú. Metalurgia prehispánica en las llanuras del Caribe colombiano*, Bogotá, 1995, pp. 39-40, figs. 1-2, and fig. 2d for a highly similar bird identified as an owl.

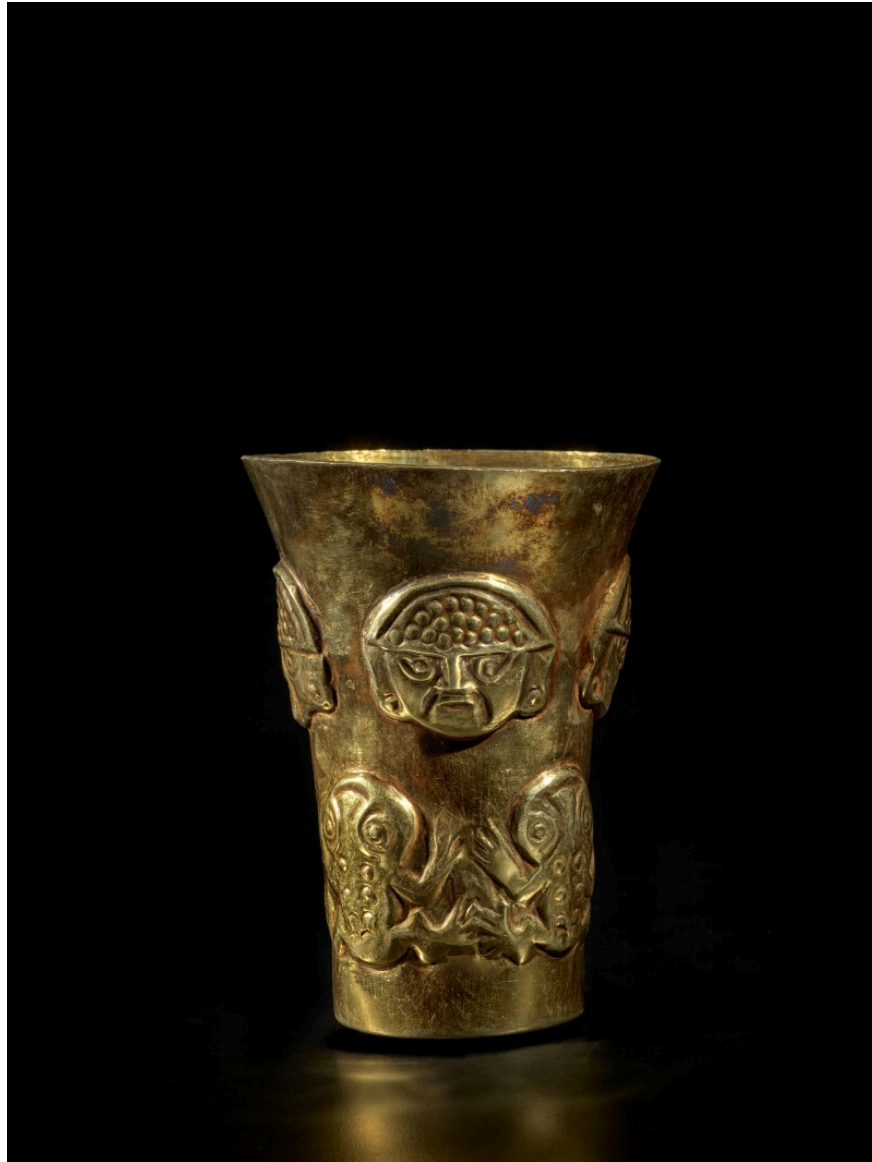
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## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



Pre-Columbian Sculpture from an Important European Private Collection

8

### Sicán Gold Kero with Heads and Frogs, circa AD 900-1100

Estimate: 20,000 - 30,000 USD

## DESCRIPTION

Pre-Columbian Sculpture from an Important European Private Collection

Sicán Gold Kero with Heads and Frogs  
circa AD 900-1100

Height: 6 in (15.2 cm)

## PROVENANCE

Paul Tishman, New York, acquired prior to 1967  
European Private Collection, acquired from the above on  
January 30, 1980  
Thence by descent

## CATALOGUE NOTE

Ceremonial cups of the Sicán era were deeply repoussé with iconic images reinforcing their ritual value. On this beaker, four heads of the Sicán deity head encircle the walls above four frogs with outspread feet. The Sicán lord was consistently portrayed with strong comma-shaped eyes and a crescentic headdress. The mere image of his face brings forth his powerful role as a warrior and ruler.

Andean frogs include *Bufo spinulosus*, which live in river beds of the desert valleys, and the large *Bufo marinus*, from the Pacific Coast. Both amphibians have textured skin as shown on this kero. Frogs had vocal behavior and often appeared mysteriously after hibernating underground. They were valued and respected for their potent serums used as hallucinogenic tools.

For examples of similar beakers, see *World of Ancient Gold*, New York World's Fair, 1964.

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<https://www.sothebys.com/en/buy/auction/2022/art-of-africa-oceania-and-the-americas/sican-gold-kero-with-heads-and-frogs-circa-ad-900>



## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



Property from a New England Private Collection

9

### Chavin Stone Carved Double Beaker, circa 700-400 BC

Estimate: 8,000 - 12,000 USD

**DESCRIPTION**

Property from a New England Private Collection

Chavin Stone Carved Double Beaker  
circa 700-400 BC

Width: 4  $\frac{3}{4}$  in (12.1cm), height 2  $\frac{7}{8}$  in (73cm)

**PROVENANCE**

André Emmerich, New York (inv. no. S9446)  
Alan C. Lapiner, Arts of the Four Quarters, Ltd., New York  
Private Collection, New England, acquired from the above on  
April 16, 1969

**EXHIBITION**

Arts of the Four Quarters, Ltd., New York, *Art of Ancient Peru and Ecuador*, 1968

**LITERATURE**

Alan C. Lapiner and André Emmerich, *Art of Ancient Peru and Ecuador*, New York, 1968, n.p. cat. no. 2 (illustrated)  
Arts of the Four Quarters, Ltd., advertisement, *Art and Archaeology Magazine*, Spring 1969  
Alan C. Lapiner, *Pre-Columbian Art of South America*, New York, 1976, p. 66, fig. 124

**CATALOGUE NOTE**

Small portable objects can be powerful tools for disseminating ideology, socio-religious beliefs and important historical narratives. In the Chavin era, steatite cups were prized ritual objects masterfully designed to relay some of the most important iconographic imagery. These portable vessels were an important implement of Chavin rituals that could be traded or easily transported.

The complex and dense imagery completely envelopes the sides and bottom of this small double-vessel, imbuing a functional object with mystical authoritative information. Each chamber is deeply carved continuously on the walls and on the base, with a sinuous and undulating field of two mythical creatures of serpent and feline form. The robust and compact profile heads are turned sharply upward, with snub noses and lunate eyes and pupils typical of felines, and the open mouths appear to have forked tongues curling upward; the spines are decorated with repeat geometric designs that continue onto the base of the cups. One chamber is dominated by tripartite plumes between the heads, the other chamber (now with a plain replacement to fill the missing portion of the wall), has a distinct triple plume issuing from the body, and human hands appear to grasp implements. The sprouting elements may relate to psychotropic substances which could have been prepared within the cups.

The Chavin culture was a complex cultural network dominating the Early Horizon (9th-3 c. BC), extending over the North/Central Peruvian Highlands and coastal region. The monumental site of Chavin de Huantar was the socio-religious epicenter, home of the famous Lanzon monolith, an engraved stone stele over 4 meters tall. Recent research at the site revealed the sophisticated engineering, technical organization, and skill whereby light and sound were manipulated in the construction of the underground tunnels and labyrinths to enhance the experience of entering a sacred space. For examples of carved stone cups in the collection of Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, D.C., see: <http://museum.doaks.org/objects->

[1/info/22990](http://info/22990); <http://museum.doaks.org/objects-1/info/22989>; and <http://museum.doaks.org/objects-1/info/22517> See also Alan C. Lapiner, *Pre-Columbian Art of South America*, New York, 1976, p. 66, fig. 123.

Small stone cups have been noted in contexts with carved bone spatula implements which share some elements of the iconography; see the Haldas and Pallka bone spatulas in Henning Bishof, "Context and Content in Early Chavin Art", in William J. Conklin and Jeffrey Quilter, eds., *Chavin: Art, Architecture and Culture*, Los Angeles, 2008, p. 124, fig. 4.11, particularly for the tripartite sprouting element.

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## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



Property from the Donald and Lucy Beldock Collection

10

### Moche Portrait Head Vessel, circa AD 500-700

Estimate: 6,000 - 8,000 USD



**DESCRIPTION**

Property from the Donald and Lucy Beldock Collection

Moche Portrait Head Vessel  
circa AD 500-700

Height: 11  $\frac{3}{8}$  in (28.9 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

André Emmerich, New York, acquired in 1964 (inv. no. A158)  
Donald and Lucy Beldock, New York, acquired from the above  
in November 1968

**CATALOGUE NOTE**

Portrait head vessels are a defining feature of the Moche culture, as Donnan notes “Moche portraits are among the most varied, objective and confident portraits produced by any civilization of the ancient world.” (Christopher Donnan, *Moche Portraits from Ancient Peru*, Austin, 2004, p. 3).

The calm and confident expression on this youthful face of large upraised eyes, pursed lips, and well-modeled cheeks showing scarification are classic elements of this distinctive genre of Moche pottery. It is made in the stirrup-spout form which could hold liquid. This dignitary wears a simple head cloth wrapped close to the head.

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## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



Property from the Donald and Lucy Beldock Collection

11

### Moche Copper Mask, circa 100 BC-AD 500

Estimate: 3,000 - 5,000 USD

**DESCRIPTION**

Property from the Donald and Lucy Beldock Collection

Moche Copper Mask  
circa 100 BC-AD 500

Width: 7 in (17.8 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

Alan C. Lapiner, Arts of the Four Quarters, Ltd., New York  
André Emmerich, New York, acquired from the above in August  
1968 (inv. no. AS170)  
Donald and Lucy Beldock, New York, acquired from the above  
in November 1968

**CATALOGUE NOTE**

Masks were a key component of the ceremonial regalia for rulers and dignitaries in ritual ceremonial and for funerary attire. They are modeled by the repoussé technique to give the overall form and facial details, and then embellished with attached headband ornaments and inlays of shell or stone in the eyes.

This mask emits an emotional and inquisitive expression in the arched concentric brows deeply repoussé and the recessed pupils perhaps once inlaid.

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## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



Property from the Donald and Lucy Beldock Collection

12

### Sicán Gold Mask, circa AD 900-1100

Estimate: 7,000 - 10,000 USD

**DESCRIPTION**

Property from the Donald and Lucy Beldock Collection

Sicán Gold Mask  
circa AD 900-1100

Width: 11 ⅞ in (28.9 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

Alan C. Lapiner, Arts of the Four Quarters, Ltd., New York  
André Emmerich, New York, acquired from the above in  
December 1966 (inv. no. A380)  
Donald and Lucy Beldock, New York, acquired from the above  
in December 1968

**CATALOGUE NOTE**

The stylized face of the “Sicán lord” is an iconic image best known from their consistent portrayal on such masks and as seen on cylinder beakers. Here the lively upturned comma-shaped eyes are carefully rimmed for emphasis, the nose is finely sculpted in repoussé and the cheeks are gracefully outlined, indicating age. The mouth is a straight short line, and ear flanges show circular ornaments at the base.

The Sicán had a prolific metallurgy tradition based on techniques refined by the earlier Moche people. Some Sicán masks were adorned with gem-tipped stalks from the eyes, circular dangles, and deep red cinnabar pigment. While such embellishments may vanish, the essential elements of the Sican lord's face are finely portrayed in this example.

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## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



Property from an American Private Collection

13

### Olmec Stone Head of a Feline, Middle Preclassic, circa 900-600 BC

Estimate: 5,000 - 7,000 USD



**DESCRIPTION**

Property from an American Private Collection

Olmec Stone Head of a Feline  
Middle Preclassic, circa 900-600 BC

Height: 2 in (5.1 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

Private Collection  
American Private Collection, acquired from the above in March 1979

**EXHIBITION**

The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, *Ancient America*, long-term loan, 2001-2011

**CATALOGUE NOTE**

The voluminous rounded pendant dramatically portrays the stylized head of a snarling feline. The deeply recessed oval eyes are incised with pupils rolled upward, the snout has tightly curled nostrils and rounded taut cheeks. The wide mouth is carved and incised with a row of teeth and fangs. The top of the head has a heart-shaped motif as if the end of the feline's tail is curled forward. The back is deeply drilled in a circular recess with two large suspension holes on the side.

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## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



Property from an American Private Collection

14

### Olmec Standing Figure, Middle Preclassic, circa 900-600 BC

Estimate: 7,000 - 10,000 USD



**DESCRIPTION**

Property from an American Private Collection

Olmec Standing Figure

Middle Preclassic, circa 900-600 BC

Height: 4  $\frac{7}{8}$  in (12.4 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

Raúl Kamffer, Kamffer Gallery, Mexico City

Private Collection, acquired from the above in 1966

By descent to the family of the present owner in 1989

**EXHIBITION**

The Art Museum, Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey, *The Olmec World: Ritual and Rulership*, December 16, 1995 - February 25, 1996; additional venue: The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, April 14 - June 9, 1996

The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, *Ancient America*, long-term loan, 2001-2011

**LITERATURE**

Michael D. Coe, ed. *The Olmec World: Ritual and Rulership*, Princeton, 1995, p. 150, cat. no. 21

**CATALOGUE NOTE**

The relaxed standing posture is a classic form of the Olmec meditative stance and is believed to be one stage of a transformation process. Here the legs are slightly bent and arms are held slightly away from the torso loosely by the side. The slender shoulders are slightly pulled back indicating his internal motion. His large and robust face show parted trapezoidal lips, a broad nose, and narrowed recessed eyes with a drilled pupil indicated in the left socket. The figure is carved in a deep greenish-black serpentine and polished to a glistening surface.

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## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



Property from an American Private Collection

15

### Olmec Jade Head of an Elderly Man, Middle Preclassic, circa 900-600 BC

Estimate: 5,000 - 7,000 USD

**DESCRIPTION**

Property from an American Private Collection

Olmec Jade Head of an Elderly Man  
Middle Preclassic, circa 900-600 BC

Height: 1 ½ in (3.8 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

Private Collection  
American Private Collection, acquired from the above in  
November 1965

**EXHIBITION**

The Art Museum, Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey, *The Olmec World: Ritual and Rulership*, December 16, 1995 - February 25, 1996; additional venue: The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, April 14 - June 9, 1996  
The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, *Ancient America*, long-term loan, 2001-2011

**LITERATURE**

Michael D. Coe, ed. *The Olmec World: Ritual and Rulership*, Princeton, 1995, p. 299, cat. no. 214

**CATALOGUE NOTE**

This remarkable portrait of a bearded old man conveys his sage humanity. He looks out from recessed eyes set well under the brows and has high cheekbones above the lined sunken cheeks and a straight narrowed mouth. The nose is pierced at the septum by the precision of a master carver. The figure, likely in a seated posture, was carved in mottled green jade and polished to an even sheen.

Bearded figures are usually associated with transformation. For similarly aged visages, see Michael D. Coe, ed. *The Olmec World: Ritual and Rulership*, Princeton, 1995, p. 299, cat. nos. 213 and 215. To see our full Digital Catalogue, including videos and slideshows, please visit our website.

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## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



Property from an American Private Collection

16

### Olmec Stone Figure of a Kneeling Man, Middle Preclassic, circa 900-600 BC

Estimate: 30,000 - 50,000 USD

**DESCRIPTION**

Property from an American Private Collection

Olmec Stone Figure of a Kneeling Man  
Middle Preclassic, circa 900-600 BC

Height: 8 ⅜ in (21.3 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

Private Collection, acquired in 1957  
William Spratling (1900-1967), Taxco el Viejo  
Private Collection  
American Private Collection, acquired from the above in 1958

**EXHIBITION**

The Center for African Art, New York, *Likeness and Beyond: Portraits from Africa and the World*, February 14 - August 12, 1990; additional venue: The Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, September 16 - November 11, 1990  
The Art Museum, Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey, *The Olmec World: Ritual and Rulership*, December 16, 1995 - February 25, 1996; additional venue: The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, April 14 - June 9, 1996

**LITERATURE**

Jean M. Borgatti and Richard Brilliant, *Likeness and Beyond: Portraits from Africa and the World*, New York, 1990, p. 149, cat. no. 96  
Michael D. Coe, ed. *The Olmec World: Ritual and Rulership*, Princeton, 1995, p. 143, cat. no. 13

**CATALOGUE NOTE**

This figure is one of a small and important corpus of kneeling figures, all portraying confident and authoritative individuals, often bearded. The kneeling position has been identified with shamanic transformation, and this corpus of figures uses the posture to reference power and status.

The power and strength of this bearded figure are aptly conveyed by his robust and compact musculature and the engaging thrust of the head. Carved with deeply set eyes perhaps once inlaid, the mouth is gently relaxed. The coiffure is crosshatched on the front half and transitions to finely striated locks down the back of the head. His chest is carefully modeled to show the ribcage and pectorals; the hands press down on the knees and the feet are folded beneath him.

Olmec art is grounded on the human figure and the manifestations it can assume through the mystical power of transformation. The shaman/ruler was the actor who connected to the supernatural and cosmic forces that ensured the rain and the harvest. The performative actions, whether in a distilled human form or the otherworldly appearance of stages of transformation, reinforced the status and authority of the ruler. The ability, even the suggestion of possible transformation, was ultimately a highly effective and powerful means of communication.

"Transformation is the central mystery of Olmec ideology and ritual, and informs the art style at its most fundamental level." (Michael D. Coe, ed., *The Olmec World: Ritual and Rulership*, Princeton, 1995, p. 126). For the other figures of this genre in museum collections, see Michael D. Coe, ed., *ibid.*, p. 142, cat. no. 12 for the figure in The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; p. 144, cat. no. 14 for the figure in The Cleveland Museum of Art; p. 170, cat. no. 42 for the figure in the Princeton University Art Museum; and p. 171, cat. no. 43 for the figure at Tulane University, New Orleans; for two figures in the more advanced stage of this posture, see p. 172, cat. no. 44, and p. 174, cat. no. 46.

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## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



Property from an American Private Collection

17

### Olmec Stone Celt with a Carved Face, Middle Preclassic, circa 900-600 BC

Estimate: 25,000 - 35,000 USD



**DESCRIPTION**

Property from an American Private Collection

Olmec Stone Celt with a Carved Face  
Middle Preclassic, circa 900-600 BC

Height: 10 ½ in (26.7 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

Raúl Kamffer, acquired in the 1960s  
American Private Collection, acquired from the above in 1984

**EXHIBITION**

The Art Museum, Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey, *The Olmec World: Ritual and Rulership*, December 16, 1995 - February 25, 1996; additional venue: The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, April 14 - June 9, 1996

**LITERATURE**

Michael D. Coe, ed. *The Olmec World: Ritual and Rulership*, Princeton, 1995, p. 205, cat. no. 95

**CATALOGUE NOTE**

"The fiercest manifestation of the supernatural is carved on the heft of effigy axes." (Michael D. Coe, ed. *The Olmec World: Ritual and Rulership*, Princeton, 1995, p. 197). Stone celts were an elemental agricultural tool that became an elevated symbol of power when they were animated and transformed with carved and incised images. The modified celts were held by rulers to signify their access to supernatural power.

Depictions of the Olmec Supernatural, the mythic deity based on the were-jaguar image who is ultimately connected to maize and rain, are carved in various forms on stone celts, some as full figures, others such as this example, simply by the diagnostic face. Perhaps the most famous example is the Kunz jade axe in the collection of the American Museum of Natural History, New York.

This massive greenstone celt is gently carved with the face of the Olmec Supernatural and incised with the headband of insignia featuring the sprouted maize symbol. The face is still decidedly human, the full parted lips are suggestive of the trapezoidal mouth and the upper lip presses into the base of the nose, the sunken eyes suggest a slight frown. The expanding celt becomes the massive headdress or helmet, divided into tiers. The main element is a bifurcated maize sprout with a larger sprout issuing upward. This overall tripartite element is secured with horizontal bands, the whole is incised with fine lines. Two sets of fine-incised parallel diagonal lines on the bands are similar to the skybands depicted in other Olmec art. The suggestion is the celt represents a tripartite cosmos, the maize as it grows into the sky and the ruler below maintains the harvest. See discussion in Michael D. Coe, ed., *ibid.*, p. 206; for other celts see pp. 201-204, cat. nos. 90-93.



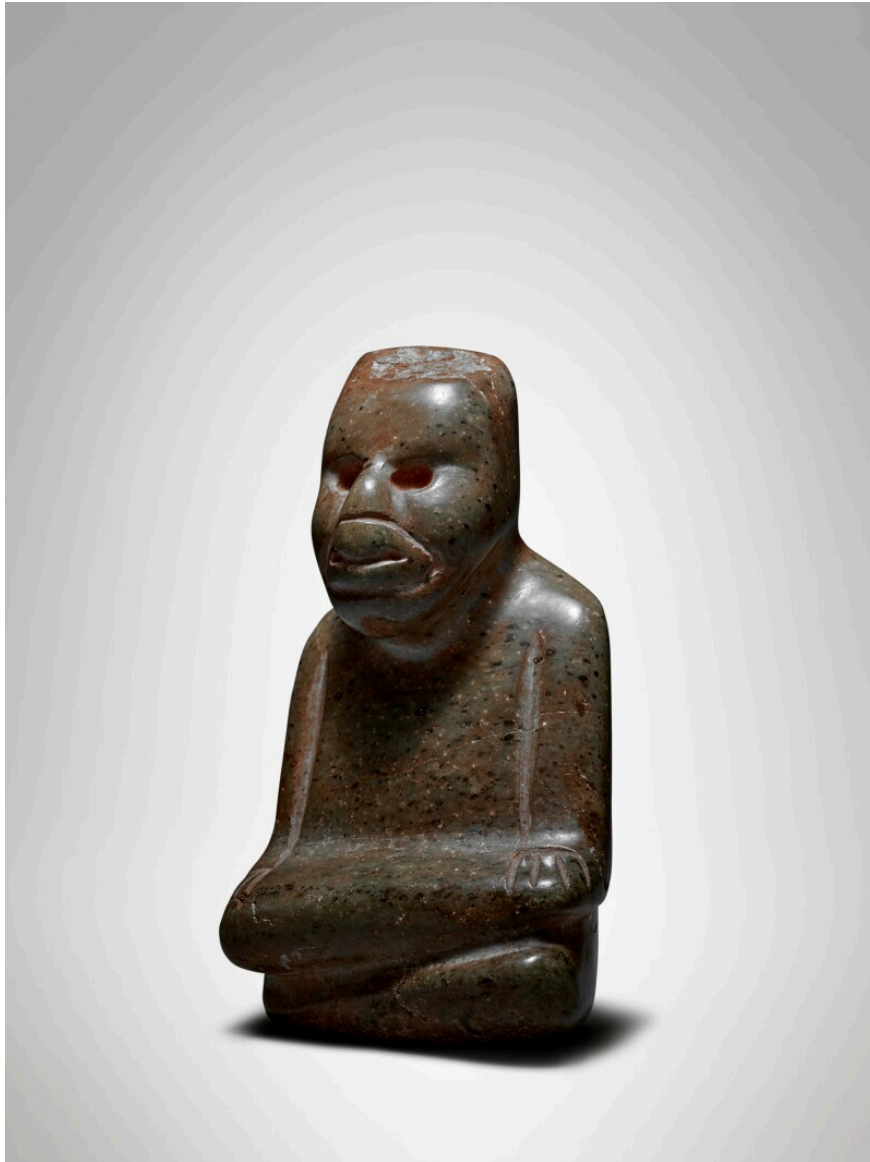
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## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



Property from an American Private Collection

18

### Olmec Stone Seated Figure, Middle Preclassic, circa 900-600 BC

Estimate: 15,000 - 25,000 USD

**DESCRIPTION**

Property from an American Private Collection

Olmec Stone Seated Figure  
Middle Preclassic, circa 900-600 BC

Height: 5 5/8 in (14.3 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

Private Collection  
Raúl Kamffer, Kamffer Gallery, Mexico City  
American Private Collection, acquired from the above in July 1967

**EXHIBITION**

The Art Museum, Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey, *The Olmec World: Ritual and Rulership*, December 16, 1995 - February 25, 1996; additional venue: The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, April 14 - June 9, 1996

**LITERATURE**

Michael D. Coe, ed. *The Olmec World: Ritual and Rulership*, Princeton, 1995, p. 155, cat. no. 27

**CATALOGUE NOTE**

The mysterious presence of this figure resides in the powerful depiction of the head wearing a wide oval mouth mask, that may be part of a larger face mask. The wearing of a mask and this particular style of a seated posture indicates a ritual ceremony.

The deeply drilled eyes are highlighted by red cinnabar which accents the grooved areas of the minimally carved hands and modeled arms. The blocky lower body tapers erectly to the slender shoulders and the legs are folded completely one atop the other with the hands resting on the knees. The olive-green pale serpentine is highly polished to a glowing finish, which continues on the roughened top of the head. This patch appears to be a deliberate presentation of the raw stone that was included in the finishing polish.

For an Olmec jade head displaying similar full lips, possibly a mouth mask, see Elizabeth P. Benson and Beatriz de la Fuente, eds., *Olmec Art of Ancient Mexico*, Washington, D.C., 1996, p. 156, pl. 33

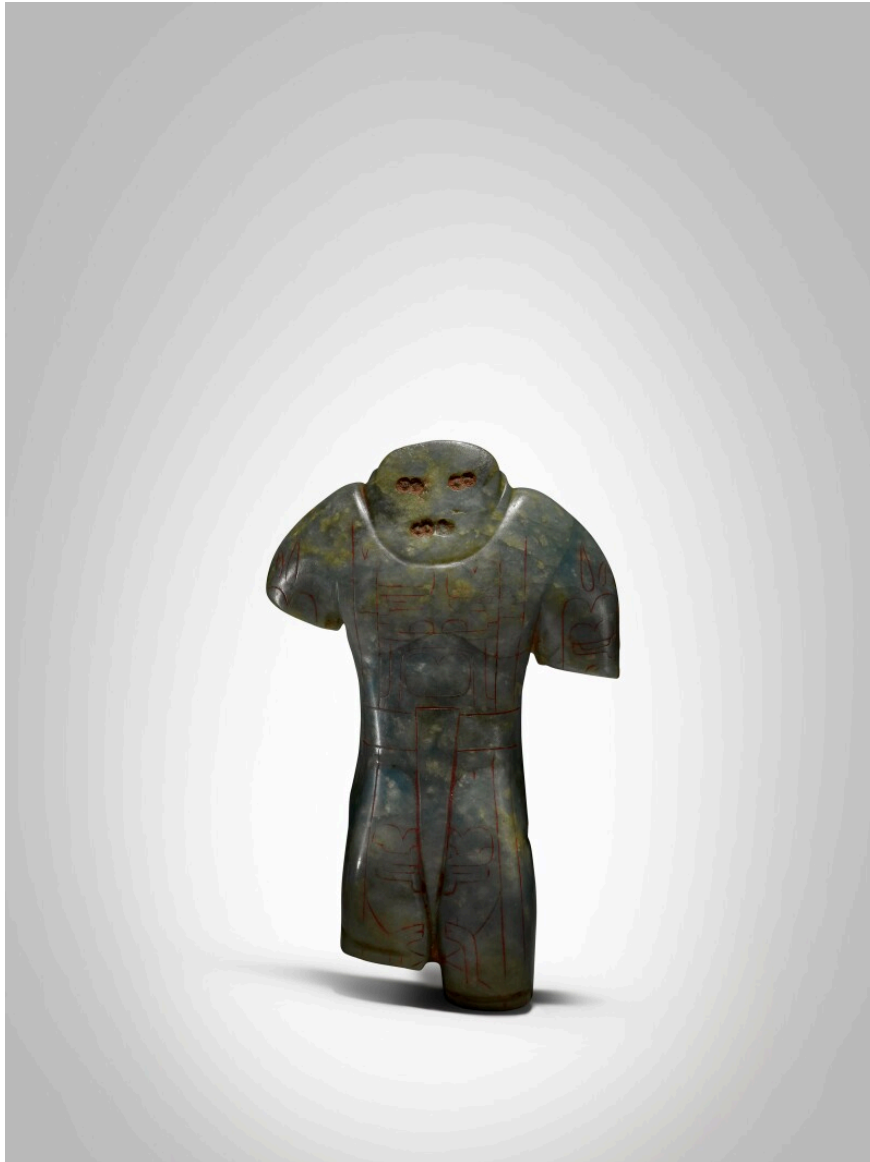
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## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



Property from an American Private Collection

19

### Olmec Jade Incised Torso, Middle Preclassic, circa 900-600 BC

Estimate: 25,000 - 35,000 USD

**DESCRIPTION**

Property from an American Private Collection

Olmec Jade Incised Torso  
Middle Preclassic, circa 900-600 BC

Height: 3  $\frac{3}{8}$  in (8.6 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

William Spratling (1900-1967), Taxco el Viejo  
Private Collection  
American Private Collection, acquired from the above in 1981

**EXHIBITION**

The Art Museum, Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey, *The Olmec World: Ritual and Rulership*, December 16, 1995 - February 25, 1996; additional venue: The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, April 14 - June 9, 1996

**LITERATURE**

Peter David Joralemon, "The Olmec Dragon: A Study in Pre-Columbian Iconography," in Henry B. Nicholson, ed., *Origins of Religious Art and Iconography in Preclassic Mesoamerica*, Los Angeles, 1976, p. 42 (foldout), fig. 10 a1 (drawing)  
Michael D. Coe, ed. *The Olmec World: Ritual and Rulership*, Princeton, 1995, p. 152, cat. no. 23  
Karl A. Taube, *Olmec Art at Dumbarton Oaks*, Washington, D.C., 2004, p. 76, fig. 34f (drawing)

**CATALOGUE NOTE**

The prized blue-green color of the jade, delicately incised motifs, and the refined physiognomy of the figure led to its valued repurposing as an heirloom. It is a figure whereby the incised motifs brand it as a central axis of power connected to the potent supernaturals of the Olmec world.

The figure has a slender waist with broad shoulders that gently narrow and are flexed backward in a ceremonial posture. The curve of the legs indicates a relaxed bend to the once-present lower legs. The figure's broken limbs were smoothed and repolished and the left arm was drilled for attachment of a lower arm. In an effort to complete the figure, a minimal face was drilled into the neck.

Important Olmec iconography is expertly incised over the torso, legs, and upper arms, marking the figure as a conduit and carrier of power. The iconography is centered on the image of the Olmec Dragon and vegetative elements. The chest is incised with the frontal face of the Supernatural that is framed within double bands running vertically the length of the body and legs. The waistband is carved to cover this framing device implying the motifs were on the body of the figure and the waistband thus covers the image. A large looped knot of the loincloth is incised on the back. The shoulders are each incised with sprouting cleft elements of maize and the upper legs appear to bisect a symmetrical frontal face.

For a figure of similar form, see Michael D. Coe, ed. *The Olmec World: Ritual and Rulership*, Princeton, 1995, p. 149, cat. no. 19; for a similar incised jade heirloom figure see Sotheby's, New York, May 17, 2000, lot 92. See also Elizabeth P. Benson and Beatriz de la Fuente, eds., *Olmec Art of Ancient Mexico*, Washington, 1996, p. 207, cat. no. 46, for a recarved jade figure.

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## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



Property from an American Private Collection

20

### Olmec Stone Crouching Transformation Figure, Middle Preclassic, circa 900-600 BC

Estimate: 7,000 - 10,000 USD



**DESCRIPTION**

Property from an American Private Collection

Olmec Stone Crouching Transformation Figure  
Middle Preclassic, circa 900-600 BC

Height: 4  $\frac{3}{8}$  in (11.1 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

Miguel Covarrubias (1904-1957), Mexico City  
George Pepper (1913-1969), Mexico City, acquired from the  
above  
American Private Collection, acquired from the above in July  
1967

**EXHIBITION**

The Art Museum, Princeton University, Princeton, New  
Jersey, *The Olmec World: Ritual and Rulership*, December 16,  
1995 - February 25, 1996; additional venue: The Museum of  
Fine Arts, Houston, April 14 - June 9, 1996  
The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, *Ancient America*, long-  
term loan, 2001-2011

**LITERATURE**

Michael D. Coe, ed. *The Olmec World: Ritual and  
Rulership*, Princeton, 1995, p. 173, cat. no. 45

**CATALOGUE NOTE**

The readied crouching position of the figure is a seamless combination of the human and animal traits in a transformation posture. The sloping back with narrowed waist, strong sculpted shoulders, and bent legs forward and back appear to be a human form, yet the thick feline tail extends over to the left thigh. The head has been minimally carved as if unfinished, with softly raised feline ears and a narrow mouth. The slight indentation at the back of the head implies the presence of a helmet as seen distinctly in other crouching transformation figures (see Michael D. Coe, ed. *The Olmec World: Ritual and Rulership*, Princeton, 1995, p. 170, fig. 1, and p. 172, cat. no. 44).

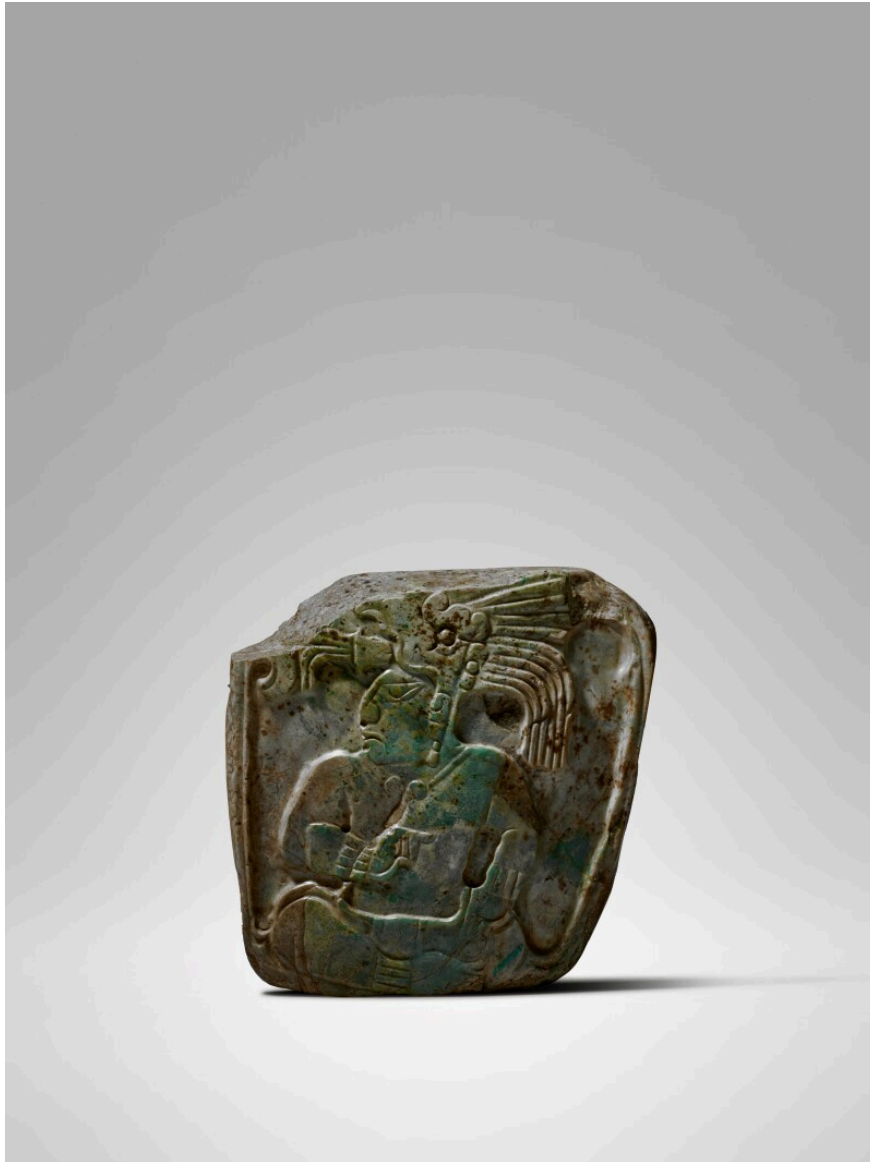
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## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



Property from an American Private Collection

21

### Maya Jade Plaque of a Seated Lord, Late Classic, circa AD 550-950

Estimate: 20,000 - 30,000 USD

**DESCRIPTION**

Property from an American Private Collection

Maya Jade Plaque of a Seated Lord  
Late Classic, circa AD 550-950

Height: 3 in (7.6 cm); Width: 3 in (7.6 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

Private Collection  
American Private Collection, acquired from the above in 1971

**EXHIBITION**

The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, *Ancient America*, long-term loan, 2001-2011

**LITERATURE**

Gerald Berjonneau, Emile Deletaille and Jean-Louis Sonnery, *Rediscovered Masterpieces of Mesoamerica: Mexico-Guatemala-Honduras*, Boulogne, 1985, p. 248, cat. no. 392 (photograph inverted)

**CATALOGUE NOTE**

This jade pendant plaque is masterfully carved in low relief with an elegant and highly detailed image of a lord, seated and gesturing in one of the most definitive images of a Maya elite. His strong and youthful body faces front in a cross-legged position and his head is turned in sharp profile to his right showing the regal extended nose bridge, tear-shaped eye, and relaxed mouth. One hand is planted firmly on his leg and his right hand is raised with delicate fingers flexed in a symbolic gesture, a posturing that is most famously depicted on the Nebaj jade plaque, indicative of a regal encounter or audience scene. The massive headdress features the mythic Principal Bird Deity with long plumes cascading to the back, his wrists are enveloped in thick bead bracelets and he is further adorned with a thin cord necklace suspending two discs.

The whole scene is enclosed in a graceful cartouche frame that represents the maw of the Otherworld, indicating we are looking into a portal to see the deceased continuing in rituals.

Audience scenes of lords are frequently depicted on painted Maya vessels. However, illustrating such an event on jade involved another dimension of materiality. Jade was considered the most valued and sacred material of enduring capability; it was a 'material with soul or spirit' (Stephen Houston, *The Life Within, Classic Maya and the Matter of Permanence*, New Haven, 2014, p. 93) Carving and polishing hard jade with the idealized portrait of a lord created an important and symbolic precious object.

The plaque is drilled laterally for suspension. The carver made use of the variegated veins of the jade to have the figure mainly in deep green.

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## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



The David M. Solinger Collection

22

### Large Mezcala Stone Figure, Type M-10, Late Preclassic, circa 300-100 BC

Estimate: 40,000 - 60,000 USD

**DESCRIPTION**

The David M. Solinger Collection

Large Mezcala Stone Figure, Type M-10  
Late Preclassic, circa 300-100 BC

Height 14 in (35.5 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

André Emmerich, New York (inv. no. G354)  
Acquired from the above on May 9, 1958

**CATALOGUE NOTE**

Mezcala stone figures distil the human form into its simplest formal elements with an elegant, expressive simplicity that is universally recognizable. The subtlest angles impart the naturalism of great sculpture. The tilt of the head on this figure suggests the emergence of an expression; firm diagonal lines of the arms against the torso, confident in placement and technique. A broad rectangular torso centers the body between the tapered legs and the narrowed brow of the head.

This Mezcala figure is a particularly large example of the M10 style, described as the cardinal image of the Mezcala tradition, which influenced subsequent types (see Carlo Gay and Frances Pratt, *Mezcala: Ancient Stone Sculpture from Guerrero Mexico*, Geneva, 1992, p. 51).

In the Solinger home, this figure was placed nearby two important works: Fernand Léger's 1951 *Jeune fille au corsage jaune* and Jean Arp's 1936 *Fruit méchant*. These works share a purity of form and color, as well as profound expressiveness.

Mezcala figures were first studied in the 1920s by the Mexican artist and collector Miguel Covarrubias, who applied both an artistic appreciation and a scholarly approach in looking at regional styles. It was not until the dedicated research of Carlo T. E. Gay in the 1960s that Mezcala styles were thoroughly described, analyzed, and illustrated in a systematic format. These efforts were recorded in the exhibit at the Museum of Primitive Art in New York, *Mezcala Stone Sculpture: The Human Figure*, 1967. Concurrently, significant attention was drawn to the art style by exhibitions in the New York art scene, notably by André Emmerich. His keen eye recognized the modernist aesthetic in the exhibition *Abstract Art Before Columbus*, 1957. Solinger was one of the early collectors of Mezcala art, and acquired the present figure from Emmerich, along with the figure offered here as lot 23.

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## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



The David M. Solinger Collection

23

### Mezcala Stone Figure, Type M-14, Late Preclassic, circa 300-100 BC

Estimate: 20,000 - 30,000 USD

**DESCRIPTION**

The David M. Solinger Collection

Mezcala Stone Figure, Type M-14  
Late Preclassic, circa 300-100 BC

Height: 9 ½ in (24.1 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

André Emmerich, New York (inv. no. G327)  
Acquired from the above on May 9, 1958

**LITERATURE**

Carlo Gay and Frances Pratt, *Mezcala: Ancient Stone Sculpture from Guerrero, Mexico*, Geneva, 1992, p. 67, pl. 53

**CATALOGUE NOTE**

Robust geometric physiognomy gives the present figure a dominating presence. Contrasting vertical and horizontal planes create a grid-like openwork of solids and voids. Figures of the M-14 style are distinguished by the openwork arms and account for only a small number of figures in the extant corpus. Gay notes the style "represents a dramatic conceptual and technical advancement in the ongoing attempt to achieve a viable human image in stone." (Carlo Gay and Frances Pratt, *Mezcala: Ancient Stone Sculpture from Guerrero, Mexico*, Geneva, 1992, p. 67).

The massive head has prominent brows that cast shadow on the recessed eye area, which sweeps down to the broad facial plane, which is defined by the ridge of the nose. The torso is subtly indicated by the ridge of the ribcage, and oval openings of the arms create the architectural form of the columns seen in Mezcala stone temple models. The figure is carved in fine-grained speckled gray-green andesite.

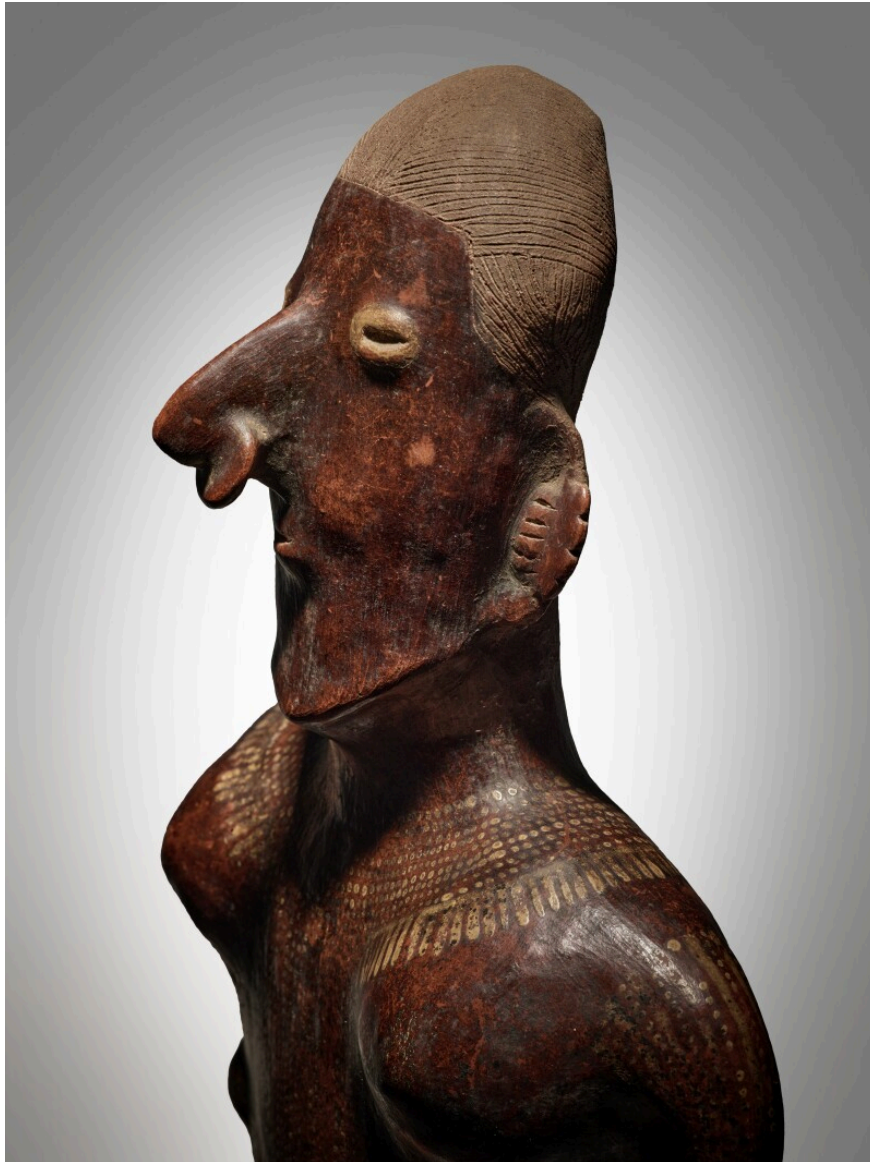
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## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



The David M. Solinger Collection

24

### Nayarit Kneeling Female Figure, San Sebastián Red style, Protoclassic, circa 100 BC-AD 250

Estimate: 5,000 - 7,000 USD

**DESCRIPTION**

The David M. Solinger Collection

Nayarit Kneeling Female Figure, San Sebastián Red style  
Protoclassic, circa 100 BC-AD 250

Height: 17 ¾ in (45.1 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

Stendahl Gallery, Los Angeles  
Acquired from the above in 1952

**CATALOGUE NOTE**

This elegant, restrained female figure is covered in fine-painted jewelry ornamenting her naked body and painted in a deep red with a lustrous burnish. The highly ornamented body, kneeling posture on the stylized elongated feet and trance-like face may indicate a female's rite of passage; such events are believed to be the subjects of certain West Mexican terracotta figures.

She leans forward slightly, her long oval face and smooth cheeks marked by a sharp chin line, a tiny slit mouth and her slender nose incorporating a disc nose-ring. The finely striated coiffure is neatly divided into sections. The serrated edge of the ears indicates multiple ornaments. The broad torso is finely painted with a collar of nine rows of tiny beads and another row of slender pendants. This cascade of fine beadwork continues down the center of her body, down her arms and continues down her back. The arms have multiple armbands and are just slightly held away from the torso as her hands press into her ribs.

For a kneeling figure of similar style, see Robert B. Pickering and Cheryl Smallwood-Roberts, *West Mexico, Ritual and Identity*, 2016, p. 14 C, cat. no. 16, for a figure in the Gilcrease Museum, Tulsa (inv. no. GM54.4051).

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## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



The David M. Solinger Collection

25

### Nayarit Seated Couple, Ixtlán del Rio style, Protoclassic, circa 100 BC - AD 250

Estimate: 5,000 - 7,000 USD



**DESCRIPTION**

The David M. Solinger Collection

Nayarit Seated Couple, Ixtlán del Rio style  
Protoclassic, circa 100 BC - AD 250

Heights: 13 in (33 cm) and 14  $\frac{3}{8}$  in (36.5 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

Sidney Janis Gallery, New York  
Acquired from the above in 1955

**CATALOGUE NOTE**

This richly decorated couple from the Solinger collection is a lively and vibrant example of Nayarit sculpture. The seated and standing couples bring to life the revered concept of ancestor worship and the primordial union of male and female creative forces. Couples engaged in a ceremonial activity, as in this pair, celebrate the continuity of a community ritual: here the male plays a turtle shell carapace with an antler, and the woman holds a bowl for communal feasting. The importance of both male and female participation in ritual events was an indication of their status, and their actions emphasized the separate but interdependent spheres of men and women. Community ceremonies and seasonal festivals took place in the public ceremonial spaces known as *guachimonton*, a compound of circular clusters of houses around a central tiered mound. The *guachimonton* provided a dedicated space for performative events.

Shared physiognomy, facial features, detailed body design, and jewelry reinforce kinship ties and support the interpretation of these figures as founding ancestors. Large heads and wide alert eyes are dominant in the Solinger couple, above stout torsos and short arms and legs. Bold facial painting of concentric wavy lines covers the faces with specific motifs around the mouths. Their bodies are marked by zigzag serpent motifs, on the female curving down each side of her chest, and from shoulder to shoulder on the male. His turtle carapace fits over his left hand and his prominent beaded armbands are likely small shell bells to enhance his musical prowess. They each have crescent pendants on the chest, earrings with applied crescent shells, and wear headbands likely of animal pelts. The female's skirt completely covers her lower body, with designs on the front of opposed triangular motifs and switching to dotted circular medallions on the underside, perhaps representing the cross-section of a plant.

Similar facial designs were recorded by the early 19th century explorer Carl Lumholtz in his travels among the Huichol Indians of the Sierra Madre. The tattooed patterns were created for certain pilgrimages and

described as masks of the gods with some designs representing clouds, serpents, or rain.

For a couple showing similar facial designs, see Mireille Holsbeke and Karel Arnaut, *Offerings for a New Life: Funerary Images from Pre-Columbian West Mexico*, Antwerp, 1998, p. 157, cat. no. 84; for a very similar couple, see Sotheby's, New York, November 17, 2006, lot 388.

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## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



The David M. Solinger Collection

26

### Jalisco Preclassic Figure with Child, Chapala style, Late Preclassic, circa 300-100 BC

Estimate: 1,500 - 2,500 USD

**DESCRIPTION**

The David M. Solinger Collection

Jalisco Preclassic Figure with Child, Chapala style  
Late Preclassic, circa 300-100 BC

Heights: 11 ¾ in (29.9 cm) and 4 ½ in (11.4 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

Sidney Janis Gallery, New York  
Acquired from the above in 1954

**CATALOGUE NOTE**

The dramatically stylized heart-shaped head of this sculpture tapers into a thin leaf-like section, giving a graceful sculptural movement to the seated mother with her infant. The tiny facial features deeply recessed within the broad sweep of the face imbue her with a trance-like calmness. The prominent multiple earrings are also featured on the small separately-modeled infant resting within her rounded and folded legs.

The abstract stylization of this figure bears a charming similarity to a 1948 painting by Jean Dubuffet entitled *Chamelier*, which David Solinger acquired in 1954 from Pierre Matisse Gallery, the same year as he purchased the present sculpture from Sidney Janis Gallery in New York.

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## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



The David M. Solinger Collection

27

### Guerrero Obsidian Figure, Late Preclassic, circa 300-100 BC

Estimate: 1,500 - 2,500 USD

**DESCRIPTION**

The David M. Solinger Collection

Guerrero Obsidian Figure  
Late Preclassic, circa 300-100 BC

Height: 6  $\frac{3}{4}$  in (17 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

Kende Galleries at Gimbel Brothers, New York  
Acquired from the above on April 26, 1951

**CATALOGUE NOTE**

A sculpture of a human figure was a rare and unusual use for the large block of obsidian from which this imposing work was carved, as such material would more often have been used for utilitarian tools or weaponry. While seemingly rudimentary, it contains important elements of the Preclassic style. The large head is carved to show the senses represented by ears, eyes and mouth. The arms are tightly bent onto the torso body in a formal posture, and the chest is rounded to show muscular contours. Short legs are gently separated by a groove, and the figure wears a knopped headdress. The reverse has been left in the natural shape of the cobble.

For other Guerrero stone figures of minimal carving, see Carlo Gay and Frances Pratt, *Mezcala: Ancient Stone Sculpture from Guerrero, Mexico*, Geneva, 1992, p. 215, pls. 255-262.

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## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



The David M. Solinger Collection

28

### Colima Figural Group, Tuxcacuesco-Ortices style, Late Preclassic, circa 300-100 BC

Estimate: 1,000 - 1,500 USD

**DESCRIPTION**

The David M. Solinger Collection

Colima Figural Group, Tuxcacuesco-Ortices style,  
Late Preclassic, circa 300-100 BC

Heights: 7½in (19 cm) and 5 in (12.7 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

Stendahl Gallery, Los Angeles  
Acquired from the above in 1952

**CATALOGUE NOTE**

This sculptural group is comprised of solid figures including a female standing proudly with an infant in her arms, dressed in a skirt, headdress and with raised tattoos on her shoulders, and a slender seated figure in repose adorned with a medallion studded headband.

To see our full Digital Catalogue, including videos and slideshows, please visit our website.

<https://www.sothebys.com/en/buy/auction/2022/art-of-africa-oceania-and-the-americas/colima-figural-group-tuxcacuesco-ortices-style>



## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



Property from an American Private Collection

29

### Xochipala Standing Figure, Early Preclassic, circa 1200-900 BC

Estimate: 8,000 - 12,000 USD



**DESCRIPTION**

Property from an American Private Collection

Xochipala Standing Figure  
Early Preclassic, circa 1200-900 BC

Height: 9 ¾ in (24.8 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

Private Collection  
American Private Collection, acquired from the above in July 1976

**EXHIBITION**

The Center for African Art, New York, *Likeness and Beyond: Portraits from Africa and the World*, February 14 - August 12, 1990; additional venue: The Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, September 16 - November 11, 1990  
The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, *Ancient America*, long-term loan, 2001-2011

**LITERATURE**

Jean M. Borgatti and Richard Brilliant, *Likeness and Beyond: Portraits from Africa and the World*, New York, 1990, p. 141, cat. no. 82  
Gerald Berjonneau, Emile Deletaille and Jean-Louis Sonnerly, *Rediscovered Masterpieces of Mesoamerica: Mexico-Guatemala-Honduras*, Boulogne, 1985, p. 199, cat. no. 307

**CATALOGUE NOTE**

Xochipala solid figures are known for their highly expressive faces and postures made with an acute naturalism. As Gilette Griffin noted, " [...] these splendid portrait figures contain an inner life quite apart from that found in other Mexican ceramic traditions." (Gilett G. Griffin, in Carlo T. E. Gay, ed., *Xochipala: The Beginnings of Olmec Art*, Princeton, 1972, p. 8).

With fleshy full legs firmly conveying his weight, this figure is in a performative stance. His head is cocked upward, and his body is twisted slightly opposite. The raised right arm shows his missing hand which is a deliberate illustration of his defect which likely implies a connection to the supernatural. The upraised left hand probably held an implement as part of his performance. As typically shown on Xochipala figures, the striated coiffure is of roughened texture.

For similar figures in rhythmic postures, see Carlo T. E. Gay, ed., *ibid.*, fig. 10 and fig. 19.

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<https://www.sothebys.com/en/buy/auction/2022/art-of-africa-oceania-and-the-americas/xochipala-standing-figure-early-preclassic-circa>



## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



Property from an American Private Collection

30

### Xochipala Seated Figure, Early Preclassic, circa 1200-900 BC

Estimate: 3,000 - 5,000 USD

**DESCRIPTION**

Property from an American Private Collection

Xochipala Seated Figure  
Early Preclassic, circa 1200-900 BC

Height: 3 in (7.6 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

Private Collection  
American Private Collection, acquired from the above in July  
1976

**EXHIBITION**

The Walters Museum of Art, Baltimore, *Ancient America*, long-term loan, 2001-2011

**LITERATURE**

Gerald Berjonneau, Emile Deletaille and Jean-Louis  
Sonnery, *Rediscovered Masterpieces of Mesoamerica: Mexico-Guatemala-Honduras*, Boulogne, 1985, p. 198, cat. no. 304

**CATALOGUE NOTE**

This seemingly introverted seated figure with a distinctively shaped head and pointed ears captures our attention as is characteristic of the best of the Xochipala style.

Xochipala art from the Guerrero region includes finely incised stone vessels and solid ceramic figurines of delicate and dynamic postures. While it has been an enigmatic style to fully classify in the study of Early Preclassic art, it is generally accepted that the Xochipala style represents a highly centralized local style within the Guerrero region that influenced subsequent ceramic styles.

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## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



Property from a Private Collection, New York

31

### Chontal Stone Mask, Late Preclassic, circa 300 - 100 BC

Estimate: 10,000 - 15,000 USD

**DESCRIPTION**

Property from a Private Collection, New York

Chontal Stone Mask

Late Preclassic, circa 300 - 100 BC

Height: 6 ¾ in (17.2 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

European Private Collection, acquired by 1969

American Trade, acquired from the above

Sotheby's, New York, May 16, 2008, lot 12, consigned by the above

Private Collection, New York, acquired at the above auction

**CATALOGUE NOTE**

Though perhaps less well-known than the sharply geometric style of its neighboring culture, the Mezcala, Chontal art merits attention and distinction from the former. Chontal stone sculpture is largely figurative. Modeled face-panels and masks notably boast abstracted representations of human faces that are occasionally - and strikingly - softened by a perceived naturalism found within deep, rounded grooves, adding depth and occasional suppleness to bones and brows. This particular mask straddles this threshold between stone stiffness and gentle, worldly likeness. Sprouting from the figure's prominent nose, his brow arches and casts a shadow over his open-work oval eyes. The figure's mouth is similarly stylized, carved simply and deeply. The cheeks, which subtly rise from the hard, mottled green and white porphyry suggest a surprising fleshiness - imbuing the elongated face with touches of familiar physicality.

As figurative objects, masks are believed to have held an important role in Chontal culture and spirituality, especially in relation to funerary rites. As Carlo Gay writes, "[Chontal masks] suggest a relationship between death and ritual, in which death is a transition from one state to another, a return to the world of the ancestors through a passage or voyage requiring appropriate symbolism to represent its liminal condition" (Carlo Gay and Robin Gay, *Chontal: Ancient Stone Sculpture from Guerrero, Mexico*, Geneva, 2001, p. 71).

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<https://www.sothebys.com/en/buy/auction/2022/art-of-africa-oceania-and-the-americas/chontal-stone-mask-late-preclassic-circa-300-100>



## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



Property from the Donald and Lucy Beldock Collection

32

### Zacatecas Seated Figures, Protoclassic, circa 100 BC-AD 250

Estimate: 6,000 - 8,000 USD

**DESCRIPTION**

Property from the Donald and Lucy Beldock Collection

Zacatecas Seated Figures  
Protoclassic, circa 100 BC-AD 250

Heights: 16 ⅞ in in (41 cm) and 14 in (35.6 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

Edward and Joyce Strauss, Colorado, acquired prior to 1971  
André Emmerich, New York ( inv. no. XWC 17 a, b), acquired  
from the above  
Donald and Lucy Beldock, New York, acquired from the above  
in June 1972

**EXHIBITION**

Richard Gray Gallery, Chicago, *Pre-Columbian Art*, March 14 -  
April 22, 1972

**CATALOGUE NOTE**

The enigmatic and lively style of Zacatecas is portrayed in this male and female duo, each showing the characteristic pierced facial features, thin looped arms and resist body decoration. The male figure has a unique hair coiffure believed to be hair wrapped around upright supports creating the appearance of mushroom stalks.

For similar examples, see Mireille Holsbeke and Karel Arnaut, eds., *Offerings for a New Life: Funerary Images from Pre-Columbian West Mexico*, Antwerp, 1998, p. 163, fig. 88.

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<https://www.sothebys.com/en/buy/auction/2022/art-of-africa-oceania-and-the-americas/zacatecas-seated-figures-protoclassic-circa-100-bc>





## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



Property from the Collection of Richard L. Weisman

33

### Veracruz Standing Figure, Late Classic, AD 550 - 950

Estimate: 6,000 - 8,000 USD

**DESCRIPTION**

Property from the Collection of Richard L. Weisman

Veracruz Standing Figure  
Late Classic, AD 550 - 950

Height: 18 ½ in (47 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

Marcia S. Weisman, California, active as a collector from the 1950s-1970s  
Thence by descent

**CATALOGUE NOTE**

Boasting their signature, strained smiles, the Veracruz “sonriente” figures seem to be performing in lively song and dance, deftly defying their terracotta stillness. Mirthful and musical, the true function of the sunny *sonrientes* continues to elude scholars of the ancient Mesoamerican region. While some have drawn associations between the figures and *Xochipilli*, the Aztec god of dance, music, and joy, others suggest that they “represent sacrificial victims [whose smiles are a] result of drug-induced euphoria intended to dispel the bad omen of sadness” (Doris Heyden, quoted in Marilyn M. Goldstein, *Ceremonial Sculpture of Ancient Veracruz*, Greenvale, New York, 1987, p. 63).

Wearing only a constricting chest band, this figure is also adorned with a beaded necklace, gourd anklets, and pointed earrings. He holds a rattle in his left hand. To see our full Digital Catalogue, including videos and slideshows, please visit our website.

<https://www.sothebys.com/en/buy/auction/2022/art-of-africa-oceania-and-the-americas/veracruz-standing-figure-late-classic-ad-550-950>



## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



African Art from the Collection of Dr. Austin Newton

34

### Bamana Headdress, Mali

Estimate: 2,000 - 3,000 USD

**DESCRIPTION**

African Art from the Collection of Dr. Austin Newton

Bamana Headdress, Mali

Length: 9 ¾ in (23.8 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

Charles Ratton, Paris

Austin Newton, Princeton, New Jersey, acquired from the  
above

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please visit our website.

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## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



African Art from the Collection of Dr. Austin Newton

35

### Bamana Zoomorphic Headdress, Mali

Estimate: 6,000 - 9,000 USD

**DESCRIPTION**

African Art from the Collection of Dr. Austin Newton

Bamana Zoomorphic Headdress, Mali

Length: 25 ½ in (64.8 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

John J. Klejman, New York

Austin Newton, Princeton, New Jersey, acquired from the  
above

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please visit our website.

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## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



African Art from the Collection of Dr. Austin Newton

36

### Bamana Zoomorphic Headdress, Mali

Estimate: 2,000 - 3,000 USD



**DESCRIPTION**

African Art from the Collection of Dr. Austin Newton

Bamana Zoomorphic Headdress, Mali

Height: 15 ¾ in (39 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

Leo D. Arons, Princeton, New Jersey

Austin Newton, Princeton, New Jersey, acquired from the  
above

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please visit our website.

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## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



African Art from the Collection of Dr. Austin Newton

37

### Bamana Zoomorphic Mask, Mali

Estimate: 3,000 - 5,000 USD

**DESCRIPTION**

African Art from the Collection of Dr. Austin Newton

Bamana Zoomorphic Mask, Mali

The reverse with a [Klejman] label, inscribed in black ink:  
"BAMBARA - REP. OF MALI 19 CENT. US"

Height: 6 5/8 in (16.8 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

John J. Klejman, New York

Mozes S. Schupf, New York, acquired from the above

Sotheby's, New York, November 21, 1996, lot 31, consigned by  
the Mozes S. Schupf Foundation

Austin Newton, Princeton, New Jersey, acquired at the above  
auction

**LITERATURE**

Jean-Baptiste Bacquart, *The Tribal Arts of Africa*, London,  
1998, p. 64, cat. no. 3

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please visit our website.**

[https://www.sothebys.com/en/buy/auction/2022/art-of-africa-oceania-  
and-the-americas/bamana-zoomorphic-mask-mali](https://www.sothebys.com/en/buy/auction/2022/art-of-africa-oceania-and-the-americas/bamana-zoomorphic-mask-mali)



## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



African Art from the Collection of Dr. Austin Newton

38

### Bamana Zoomorphic Mask for the Korè Association, Mali

Estimate: 15,000 - 25,000 USD

## DESCRIPTION

African Art from the Collection of Dr. Austin Newton

Bamana Zoomorphic Mask for the Korè Association, Mali

Height: 17 1/8 in (43.5 cm)

## PROVENANCE

Hubert Goldet, Paris

François de Ricqlès, Paris, *Arts primitifs. Collection Hubert Goldet*, June 30 - July 1, 2001, lot 117

Austin Newton, Princeton, New Jersey, acquired at the above auction

## CATALOGUE NOTE

The artist that created this powerful mask intended to evoke fear and submission in the viewer – as was the ritual purpose of *surukuw*, or hyena masks, which were worn in *kore*, a Bamana male initiation ceremony. The present mask is of impressive volume, with a large mouth gaping open in menacing laughter. *Surukuw* masks are distinguished by the pronounced protrusion of the rounded forehead and cranial ridge on the top of the head, and oblong geometric face, with gaping circular or rectangular eyes; for a classic example, see Jean-Paul Colleyn, *Bamana: The Art of Existence in Mali*, New York, 2001, p. 119, cat. no. 104.

*Kore* functions as an initiation ceremony, but it also “is included among the rites that influence the natural cycle, for *kore* masters boast of being able to appeal directly to the heavens, the divine supplication par excellence, in order to make it rain. Formerly, when rain was abundant, they were able conversely to end storms that were threatening to overwhelm farmers in their fields” (Jean-Paul Colleyn, *Visions of Africa: Bamana*, 2008, p. 28).

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<https://www.sothebys.com/en/buy/auction/2022/art-of-africa-oceania-and-the-americas/bamana-zoomorphic-mask-for-the-kore-association>



## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



African Art from the Collection of Dr. Austin Newton

39

### Bamana Zoomorphic Headdress for the Kòmò Power Association, Mali

Estimate: 15,000 - 25,000 USD

**DESCRIPTION**

African Art from the Collection of Dr. Austin Newton

Bamana Zoomorphic Headdress for the Kòmò Power Association, Mali

Height: 46 7/8 in (119 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

Pierre Loeb, Paris

Raymond and Laura Wielgus, Chicago, acquired from the above

Allan Frumkin, Chicago, acquired from the above

Sotheby Parke-Bernet, *African, Oceanic, American Indian and Pre-Columbian Art from the Collection of Allan Frumkin*, January 27, 1968, lot 11

Merton D. Simpson, New York, acquired at the above auction

Simone de Monbrison, Paris

Private Collection, acquired from the above

Christie's, Paris, December 4, 2009, lot 1, consigned by the above

Austin Newton, Princeton, New Jersey, acquired at the above auction

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## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



African Art from the Collection of Dr. Austin Newton

40

### Tellem Figure, Mali, circa 11th – 15th Century

Estimate: 40,000 - 60,000 USD

**DESCRIPTION**

African Art from the Collection of Dr. Austin Newton

Tellem Figure, Mali, circa 11th – 15th Century

Height: 19  $\frac{3}{4}$  in (50.2 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

Charles Ratton, Paris

Austin Newton, Princeton, New Jersey, acquired from the above in the Fall of 1967

**EXHIBITION**

Princeton University Art Museum, Princeton, New Jersey, *Surfaces Seen and Unseen*, July 2 – October 9, 2016  
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, *Sahel: Art and Empires on the Shores of the Sahara*, January 30 – March 12, 2020, and August 29 – October 26, 2020

**LITERATURE**

Princeton University Art Museum, ed., *Surfaces Seen and Unseen* [exhibition checklist], Princeton, 2016, p. 7  
Alisa LaGamma, ed., *Sahel: Art and Empires on the Shores of the Sahara*, New York, 2020, p. 175, cat. no. 92, and p. 282, cat. no. 92

**CATALOGUE NOTE**

This exceptionally fine Tellem figure was acquired from the legendary French art dealer Charles Ratton in 1967 by Dr. Austin Newton, while he was conducting research in molecular biology with Nobel Laureate Jacques Monod at the Pasteur Institute in Paris. It has remained in the Newton collection since then, and has most recently been exhibited in the landmark 2020 exhibition *Sahel: Art and Empires on the Shores of the Sahara* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and published in the catalogue of that exhibition.

The Bandiagara Escarpment is a majestic run of sandstone cliffs that slices across present-day central Mali between the Niger River and the Burkina Faso border. Rising over 1,500 feet in sections, the Bandiagara is one of the most dramatic land formations of sub-Saharan Africa and provides a natural protective barrier against foreign incursions and natural shelters for wood sculptures produced by successive interrelated cultures. The Dogon people arrived in the region circa the 15th century and since then, have thrived by constructing their villages on the steep cliff face along the escarpment.

Dogon oral traditions relate the story of their arrival to the Bandiagara after an exodus from their original homeland in Mande at the heart of the Mali empire. They referred to the inhabitants they encountered as *tellem*, or “we found them”, and this term has come to describe the pre-Dogon culture and sculptural style of the region. Some Tellem are thought to have fled upon the arrival of the outsiders, while some were integrated into the Dogon population. According to Alisa LaGamma: “Later Dogon residents of the Bandiagara removed the creations of their Tellem precursors from the necropolises, for example, and harnessed the potency of these works by positioning them on their own altars and integrating them into their own spiritual practices.” (Alisa LaGamma, ed., *Sahel: Art and Empires on the Shores of the Sahara*, New York, 2020, p. 169).

Scholars have suggested that a period of cultural overlap between the Tellem and the Dogon followed the arrival of the latter to the Bandiagara, and the sculptural

styles of each are undoubtedly interrelated, making it sometimes difficult to discern one from the other. The group of sculptures traditionally attributed to the Tellem share certain attributes including a tall, narrow overall form, with short bent legs, columnar torso, and large columnar head. The figure is frequently depicted with both arms raised straight above and formed continuously with the sides of the head, often with the hands meeting at the apex of the sculpture. These figures are frequently entirely encased in applied organic material, which forms a hardened crusty craquelure, concealing the detail of the sculpture's surface but enhancing the appearance of age and ritual power.

The Newton Tellem figure is particularly distinguished by its subtle contrapposto; the hermaphroditic figure stands in a slightly asymmetrical pose suggesting movement and lively, energetic potential. Beneath the thickly-encrusted sacrificial surface, we can still discern eyes, nose, mouth and a plank-shaped beard jutting from the chin; beneath is a rhythmically stacked arrangement of breasts, belly, umbilicus, and pubis. Little is known of the specific iconography in Tellem artwork, but the sculptor of the present figure has quite deliberately included both male and female characteristics related to procreation, fecundity, and continuity of a family lineage. The gesture of raised arms is an archetype of art from the Bandiagara region. As Hélène Leloup has noted: "The statues with raised arms form part of a group of statuettes of different styles found all along the cliffs: Djennenke, classical Tellem, Niongom, Komakan, to which we can add the ones mentioned by Leiris, the 'raised arm' statuettes in the caves of Yougo [...]. These figures played a role in rainmaking rites performed by all the different inhabitants of the cliffs: a cultural adaptation by osmosis responding to the chronic lack of rain along the dry cliffs" (Hélène Leloup, *Dogon*, Paris, 2009, p. 127).

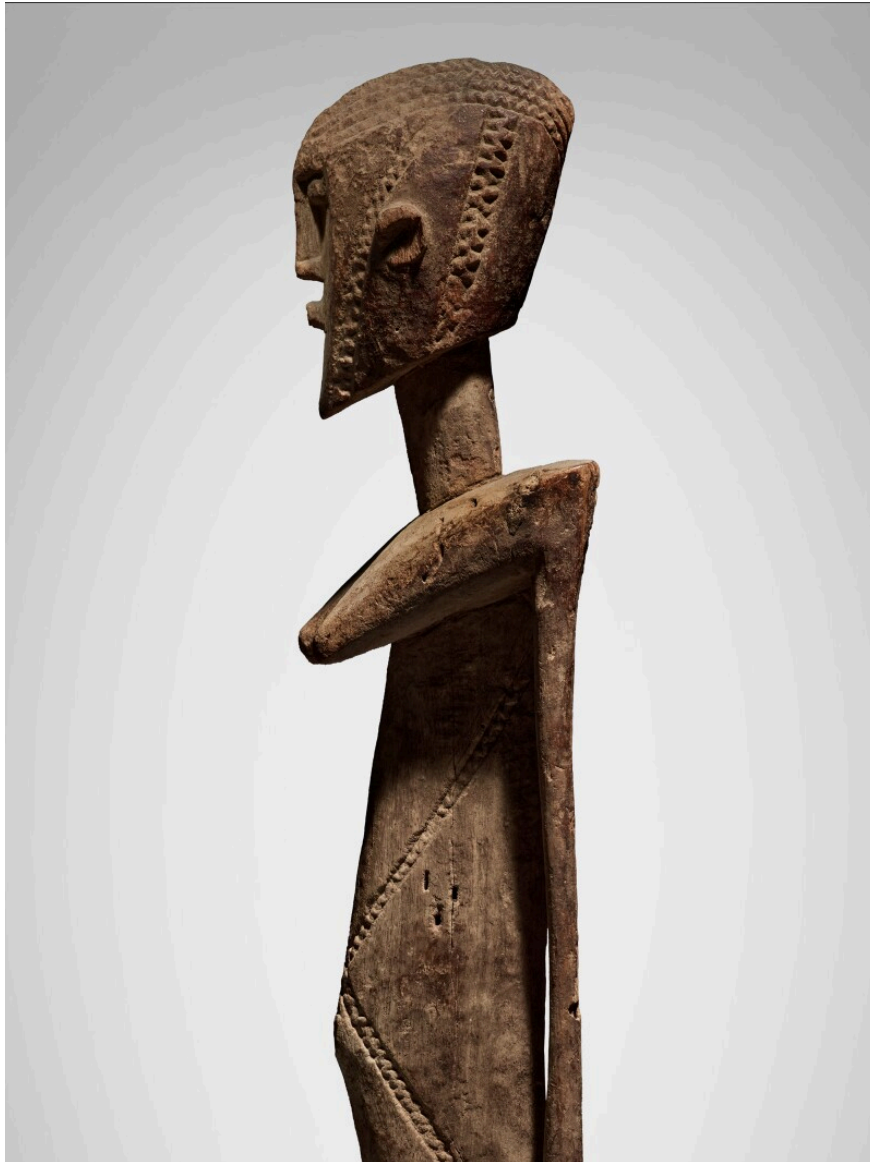
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## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



African Art from the Collection of Dr. Austin Newton

41

### Dogon Figure Fragment, Mali

Estimate: 3,000 - 5,000 USD

**DESCRIPTION**

African Art from the Collection of Dr. Austin Newton

Dogon Figure Fragment, Mali

Height: 20 ¾ in (51.8 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

Charles Ratton, Paris

Austin Newton, Princeton, New Jersey, acquired from the  
above by the early 1970s

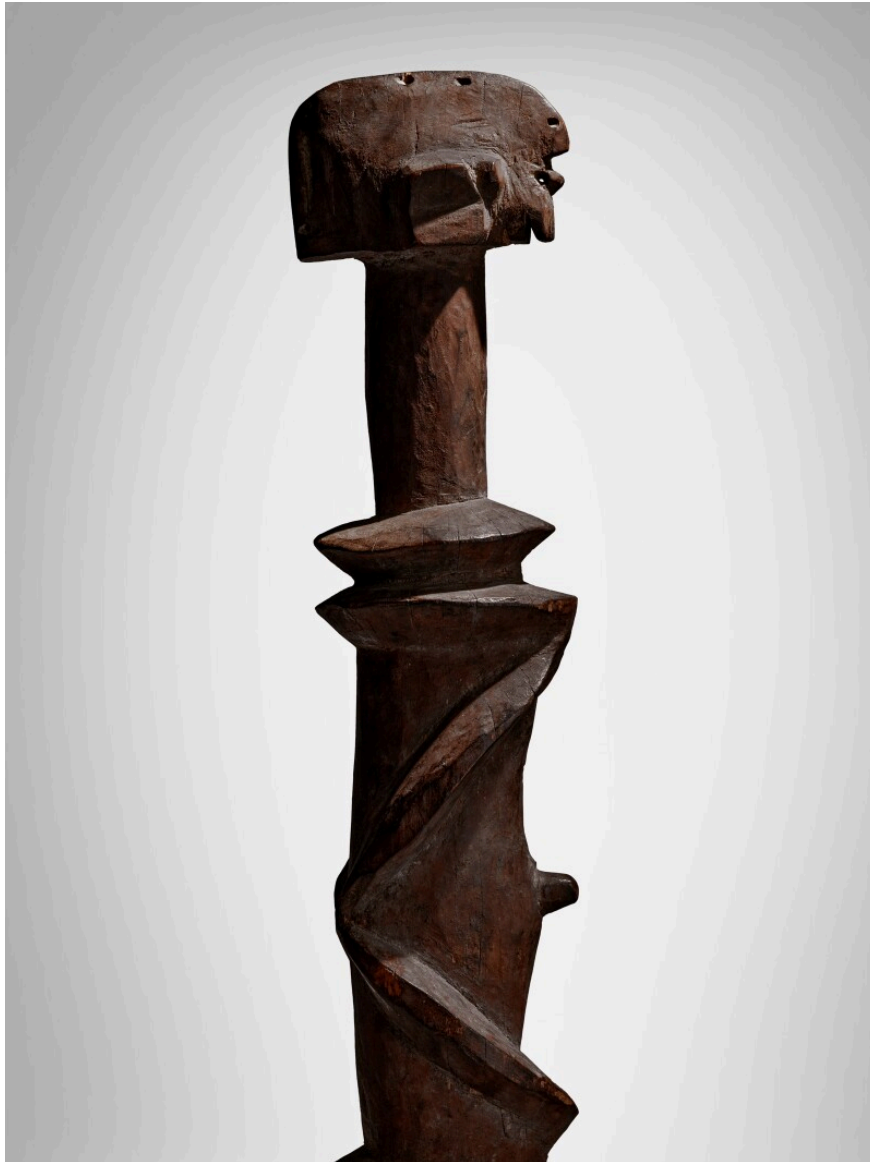
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## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



African Art from the Collection of Dr. Austin Newton

42

### Wurkun Figure, Muri Mountains, Upper Benue River, Nigeria

Estimate: 2,000 - 3,000 USD

**DESCRIPTION**

African Art from the Collection of Dr. Austin Newton

Wurkun Figure, Muri Mountains, Upper Benue River, Nigeria

Height: 17 1/8 in (43.5 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

James Willis, San Francisco

Austin Newton, Princeton, New Jersey, acquired from the  
above

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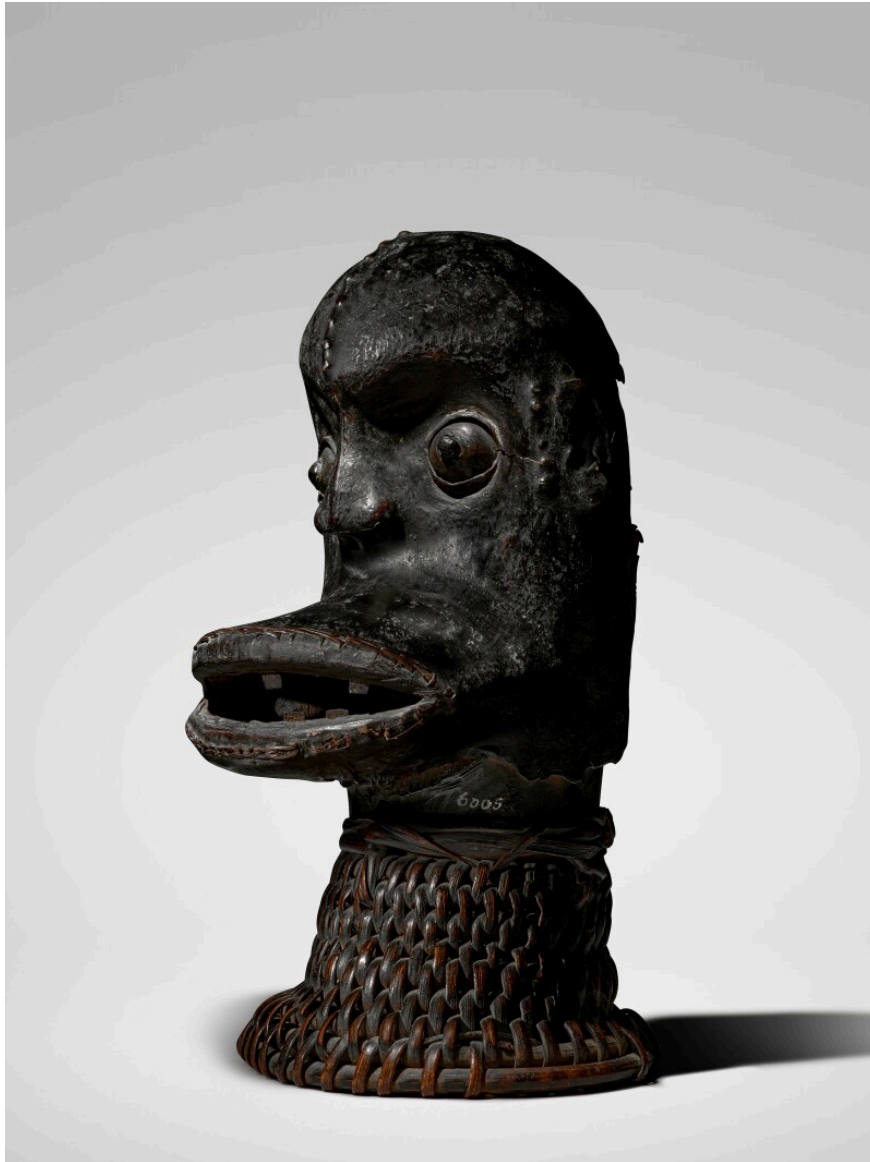
<https://www.sothebys.com/en/buy/auction/2022/art-of-africa-oceania-and-the-americas/wurkun-figure-muri-mountains-upper-benue-river>





## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



African Art from the Collection of Dr. Austin Newton

43

### Boki Headdress, Cross River Region, Nigeria

Estimate: 4,000 - 6,000 USD

**DESCRIPTION**

African Art from the Collection of Dr. Austin Newton

Boki Headdress, Cross River Region, Nigeria

The interior with a round label printed "B.M.S. COLLECTION", and inscribed in black ink "L. 16."; one side of the neck inscribed in white ink "6005"

Height: 8 7/8 in (22.5 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

Baptist Missionary Society (inv. no. L. 16.)

Charles Ratton, Paris

Austin Newton, Princeton, New Jersey, acquired from the above by the early 1970s

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## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



African Art from the Collection of Dr. Austin Newton

44

### Mambila Double Face Helmet Mask, Nigeria

Estimate: 5,000 - 7,000 USD

**DESCRIPTION**

African Art from the Collection of Dr. Austin Newton

Mambila Double Face Helmet Mask, Nigeria

Length: 15 in (38 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

John J. Klejman, New York

Austin Newton, Princeton, New Jersey, acquired from the  
above in the early 1970s

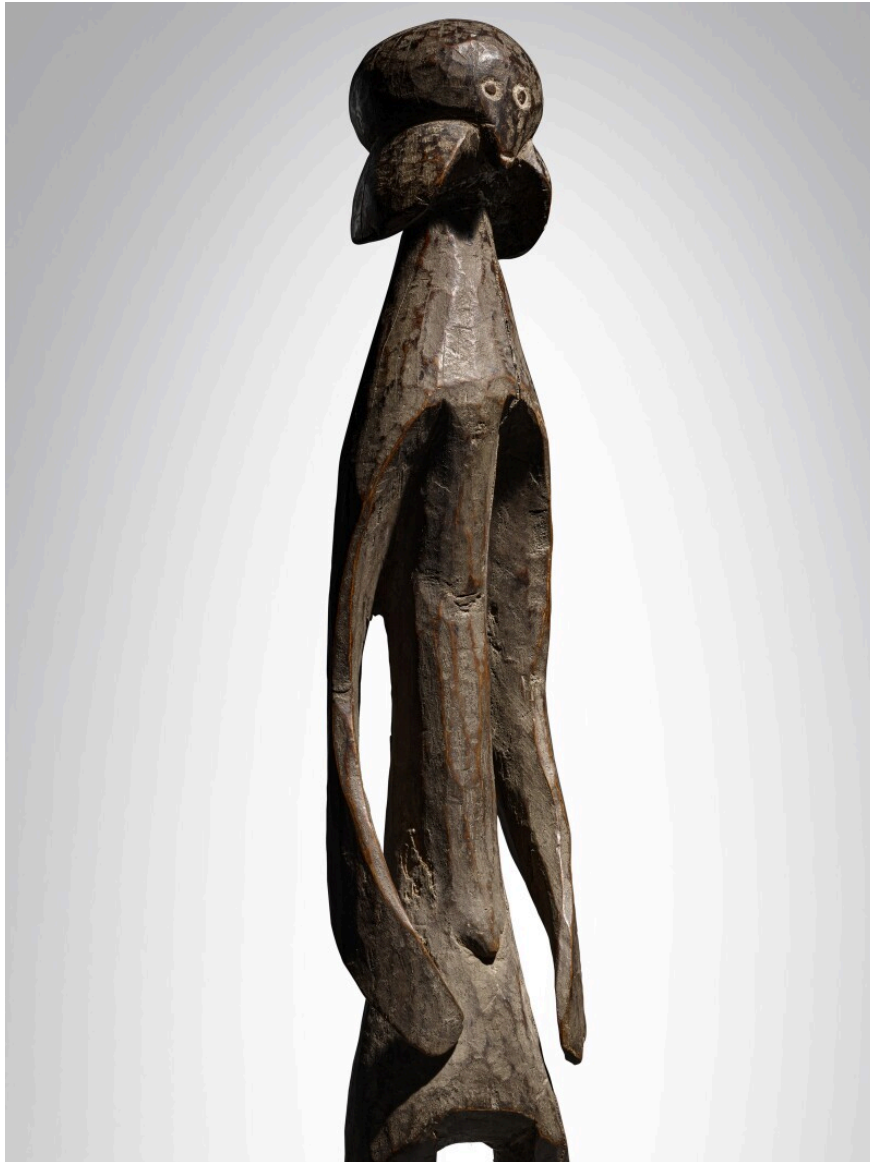
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## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



African Art from the Collection of Dr. Austin Newton

45

### Mumuye Figure, Nigeria

Estimate: 20,000 - 30,000 USD

**DESCRIPTION**

African Art from the Collection of Dr. Austin Newton

Mumuye Figure, Nigeria

Height: 39 ¼ in (99.7 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

Hélène Kamer, Paris

Austin Newton, Princeton, New Jersey, acquired from the above in the early 1970s

**CATALOGUE NOTE**

The art of the Mumuye people is one of the most celebrated and innovative sculptural traditions from Africa. Their distinctive and ingenious mode of representing the human form as a set of geometric volumes captured the wider attention of the outside world at a relatively late date. It was not until the 1960s that Philippe Guimiot discovered the extraordinary statuary of the Mumuye people, and Philippe Guimiot and Jacques Kerchache were the first to reveal this major form of African art to an audience of Western connoisseurs.

One of the only Western art historians to witness these statues being used in their original context was Arnold Rubin, who noted: "The high degree of stylistic diversity is paralleled by the variety of functions of Mumuye figures: some were used as oracles, others in connection with healing, and still others reinforced the status of important elders as embodiments of vaguely conceived tutelary spirits. Sometimes, one figure was employed in two or more of these capacities. A particular function cannot be correlated with size, style, or other formal attributes." (Arnold Rubin in Susan M. Vogel, ed., *For Spirits and Kings: African Art from the Paul and Ruth Tishman Collection*, New York, 1981, p. 155).

The dynamism of the figure's volumes are strikingly reminiscent of the vocabulary of Cubism, and the plastic study of movement undertaken by modern artists in general. As Christine Stelzig observed: "In view of their subtle configuration and overall design Mumuye sculptures remind the viewer not only of Brancusi, but also of Giacometti - or, to put it more correctly: many of Brancusi's and Giacometti's works are reminiscent of the magnificent works of these African sculptors." (Christine Stelzig, "Masterpieces of Sculpted Form: Mumuye Figures", in Oliver Wick and Antje Denner, eds., *Visual Encounters: Africa, Oceania, and Modern Art*, Basel, 2009, folio VIII, n.p.).

Prior to Guimiot's discovery of Mumuye statuary in situ in the late 1960s, the only accessible example of this tradition in Western museums was a figure that entered the British Museum in 1922 (inv. no. Af1922,0610.2;

illustrated in William Rubin, ed., *"Primitivism" in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern*, New York, 1984, Vol. 2, p. 597). There it did not fail to capture the attention of the young British sculptor Henry Moore, who studied the Mumuye figure's volumes in careful drawings made in his notebook of 1922-24 (*ibid.*; see p. 595 *et. seq.* for further discussion).

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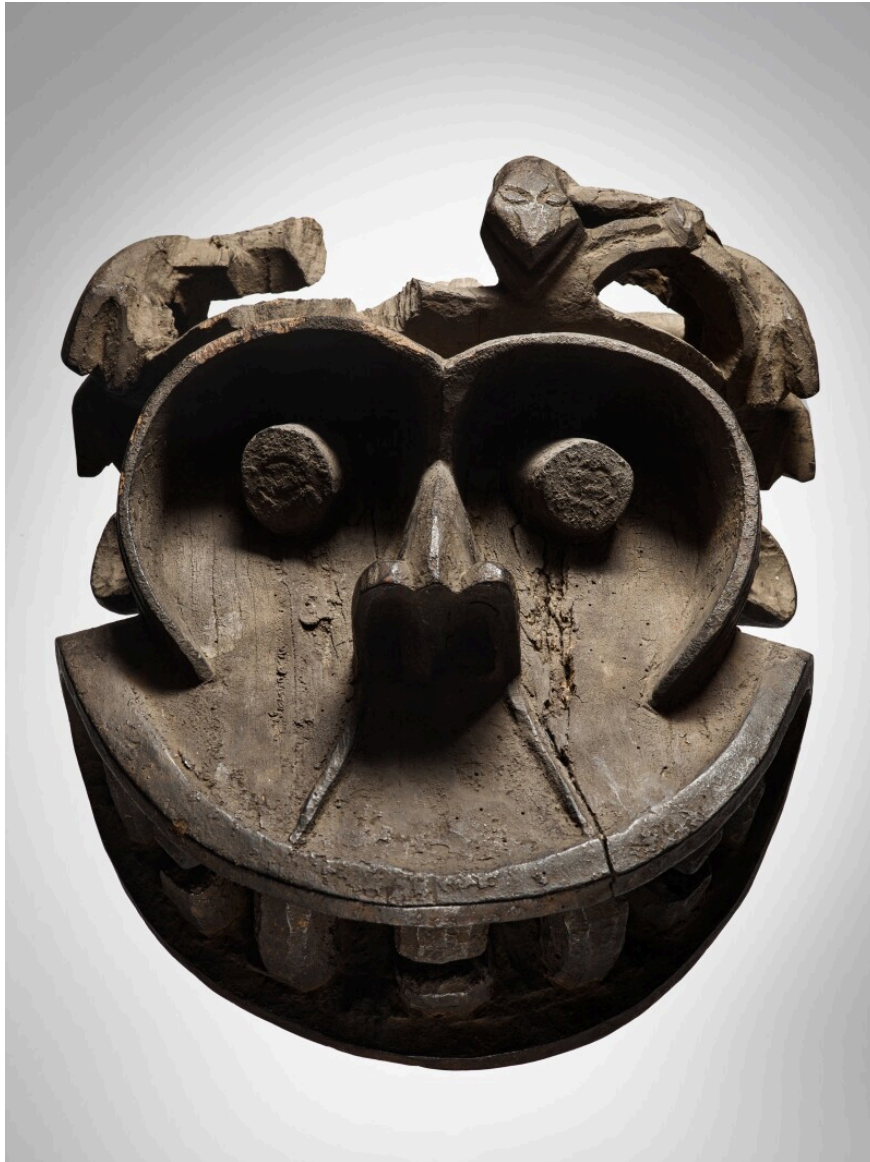
<https://www.sothebys.com/en/buy/auction/2022/art-of-africa-oceania-and-the-americas/mumuye-figure-nigeria>





## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



African Art from the Collection of Dr. Austin Newton

46

### Kom Mask, Grassfields, Cameroon

Estimate: 10,000 - 15,000 USD

**DESCRIPTION**

African Art from the Collection of Dr. Austin Newton

Kom Mask, Grassfields, Cameroon

Height: 17 in (43.1 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

Rene Rasmussen, Paris

Austin Newton, Princeton, New Jersey, acquired from the  
above in the early 1970s

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## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



African Art from the Collection of Dr. Austin Newton

47

### Bamileke Mask, Grassfields, Cameroon

Estimate: 8,000 - 12,000 USD

**DESCRIPTION**

African Art from the Collection of Dr. Austin Newton

Bamileke Mask, Grassfields, Cameroon

Height: 13 in (33 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

John J. Klejman, New York

Austin Newton, Princeton, New Jersey, acquired from the  
above in the early 1970s

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## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



African Art from the Collection of Dr. Austin Newton

48

### Bamileke-Bangwa Figure of a King, Fontem Valley, Grassfields, Cameroon

Estimate: 60,000 - 90,000 USD

**DESCRIPTION**

African Art from the Collection of Dr. Austin Newton

Bamileke-Bangwa Figure of a King, Fontem Valley, Grassfields, Cameroon

Height: 37 ¼ in (94.5 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

Jean-Michel Huguenin, Paris, acquired *in situ* in 1967  
Charles Ratton, Paris, presumably acquired from the above  
Austin Newton, Princeton, New Jersey, acquired from the above by the early 1970s

**LITERATURE**

Pierre Harter, *Arts anciens du Cameroun*, Arnouville, 1986, p. 307, figs. 343-344

**CATALOGUE NOTE**

Fontem is the most important of the nine Bangwa chiefdoms in the westernmost part of the area designated as Bamileke in the Grassfields region of present-day Cameroon, and is the origin of some of the most celebrated sculptures in the entire corpus of Sub-Saharan African Art. Major figural sculptures made throughout the Bamileke-Bangwa region are called *lefem*, and represent Bangwa chiefs, depicted wearing ceremonial dress with rich regalia including ivory bracelets, beaded collars and necklaces, and chiefly headwear. In the Fontem Valley a surrounding region, a style emerged in the 19<sup>th</sup> century which is particularly well-represented in canonical museum collections of African Art, rightly celebrated for its high degree of refinement, textural expressiveness, and formal dynamism. Rendering the human form in an unflinching, expressive sculptural style, they emphasize the personality and attributes of a particular *fon*, or king. The *fon* of a particular chiefdom was endowed with both civic and sacred power, and his position was both political and religious. Departed members of the lineage of the *fon* were venerated ancestors, represented by *lefem*, which were stylistically idiosyncratic and bore features specific to their subject.

The present figure was acquired in 1967 in Cameroon by the French dealer Jean-Michel Huguenin, and was published in Pierre Harter's monograph *Arts anciens du Cameroun*, in 1986. It appears there adjacent to perhaps the most famous work of Cameroon art, the so-called "Bangwa Queen", which was photographed in 1933 by Man Ray and was formerly in the Helena Rubinstein and Harry Franklin collections (Sotheby's, New York, *The Harry A. Franklin Family Collection of African Art*, April 21, 1990, lot 127). Harter suggests that the present sculpture 'corresponds' to the Rubinstein figure, and indeed it bears the same style of collar and necklace, and is morphologically quite similar in the treatment of the legs, body, and arms.



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please visit our website.

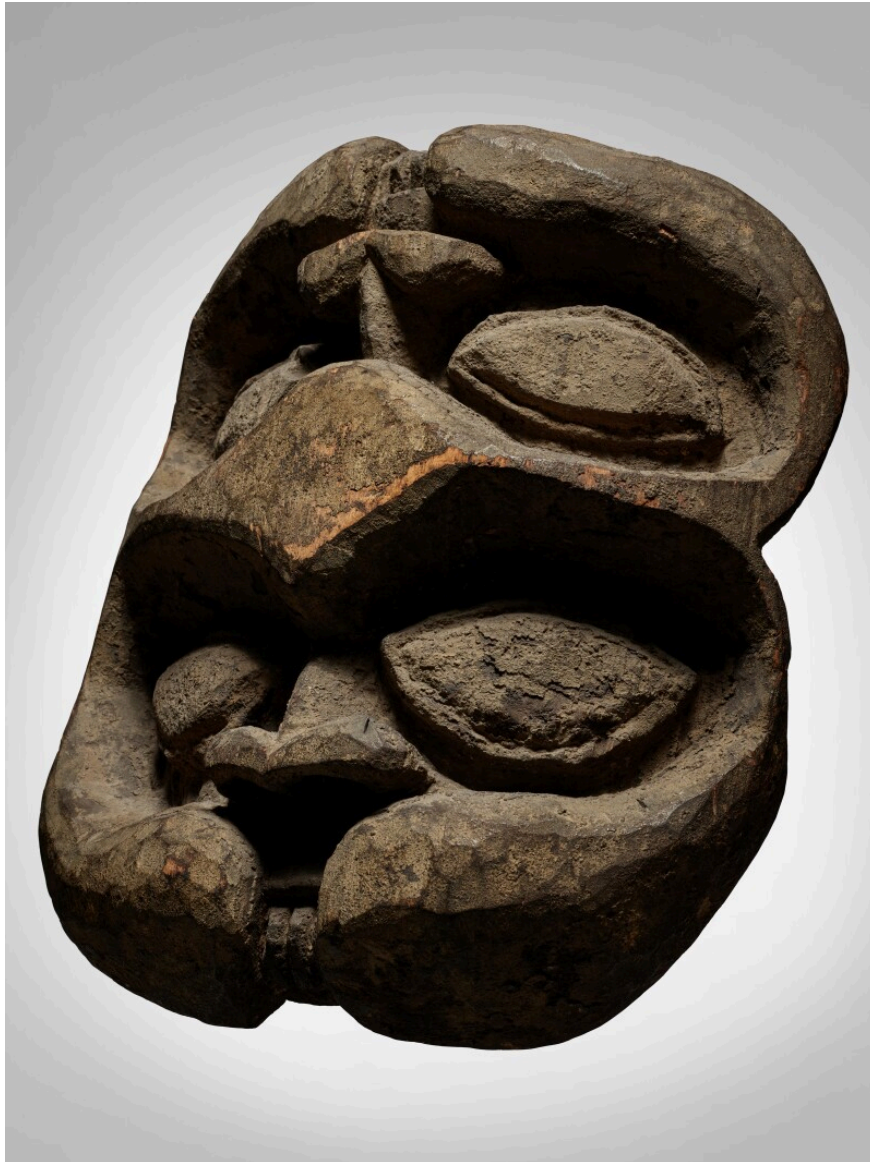
<https://www.sothebys.com/en/buy/auction/2022/art-of-africa-oceania-and-the-americas/bamileke-bangwa-figure-of-a-king-fontem-valley>





## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



African Art from the Collection of Dr. Austin Newton

49

### Bamileke-Bangwa Headdress for the Night Society, Grassfields, Cameroon

Estimate: 6,000 - 9,000 USD

**DESCRIPTION**

African Art from the Collection of Dr. Austin Newton

Bamileke-Bangwa Headdress for the Night Society,  
Grassfields, Cameroon

Height: 19 ½ in (49.5 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

Harry A. Franklin, Beverly Hills, acquired in the 1970s

Valerie B. Franklin, Beverly Hills, acquired by descent from the  
above

Sotheby's, New York, *The Harry A. Franklin Family Collection of  
African Art*, April 21, 1990, lot 196

Austin Newton, Princeton, New Jersey, acquired at the above  
auction

**EXHIBITION**

Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History, *Expressions of  
Cameroon Art: The Franklin Collection*, February 1 – November  
15, 1986; additional venues: The Baltimore Museum of Art,  
June 1 – September 6, 1987; The Hood Museum of Art,  
Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire, October 5, 1987  
– January 3, 1988; The Dayton Art Institute, June 6 –  
September 4, 1988; The Flint Institute of Arts, October 3, 1988  
– January 8, 1989; The Palo Alto Cultural Center, October 7 –  
December 31, 1989

**LITERATURE**

Tamara Northern, *Expressions of Cameroon Art: The Franklin  
Collection*, Los Angeles, 1986, p. 66, cat. no. 59

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please visit our website.**

[https://www.sothebys.com/en/buy/auction/2022/art-of-africa-oceania-  
and-the-americas/bamileke-bangwa-headdress-for-the-night-society](https://www.sothebys.com/en/buy/auction/2022/art-of-africa-oceania-and-the-americas/bamileke-bangwa-headdress-for-the-night-society)



## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



African Art from the Collection of Dr. Austin Newton

50

### Kota-Obamba Reliquary Guardian Figure, Gabon

Estimate: 5,000 - 7,000 USD

**DESCRIPTION**

African Art from the Collection of Dr. Austin Newton

Kota-Obamba Reliquary Guardian Figure, Gabon

Height: 18 in (45.7 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

Charles Ratton, Paris

Austin Newton, Princeton, New Jersey, acquired from the  
above by the early 1970s

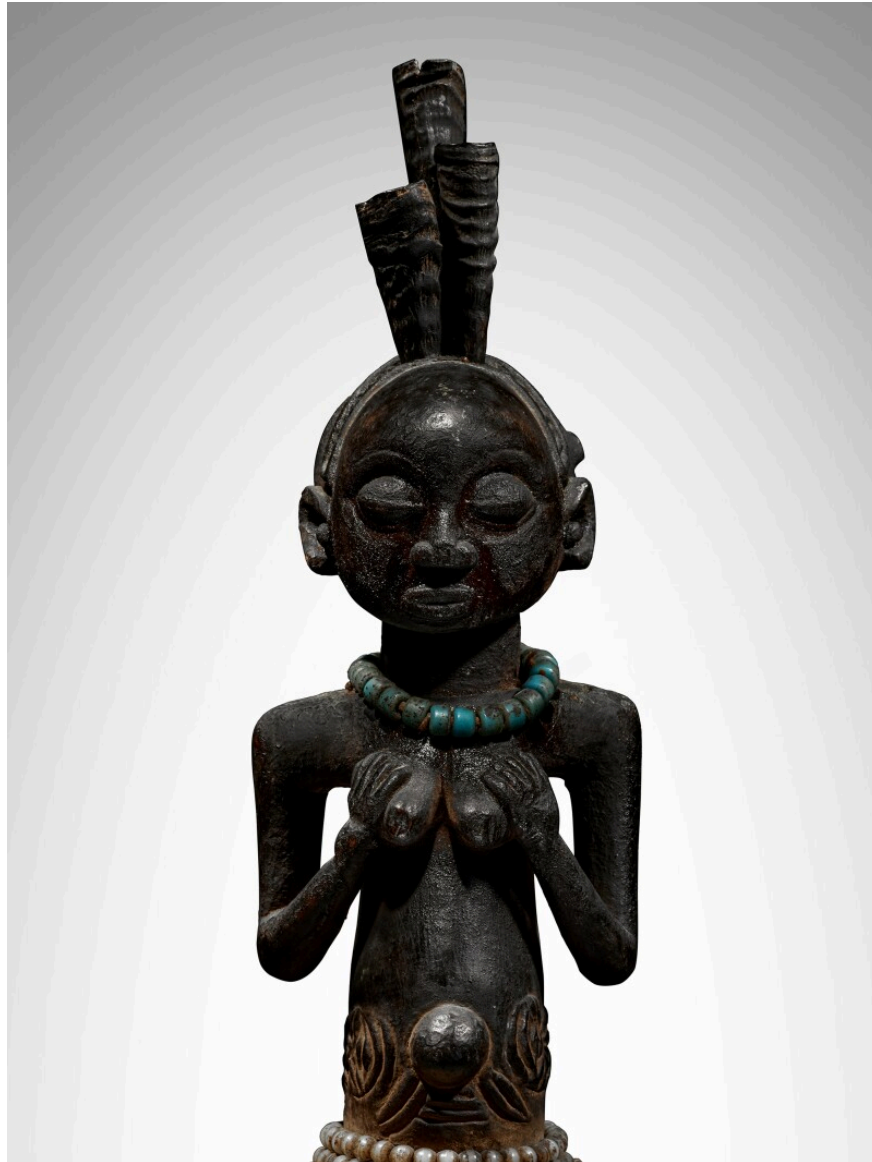
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## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



African Art from the Collection of Dr. Austin Newton

51

### Luba Female Half Figure, Democratic Republic of the Congo

Estimate: 50,000 - 70,000 USD

● Restricted Species

**DESCRIPTION**

African Art from the Collection of Dr. Austin Newton

Luba Female Half Figure, Democratic Republic of the Congo

Height of figure: 12 ½ in ( 31.7 cm); Height including raffia skirt: 18 ½ in (47 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

John J. Klejman, New York

Austin Newton, Princeton, New Jersey, acquired from the above in the early 1970s

**CATALOGUE NOTE**

Female beauty and power is the pervasive theme of much of the artwork of the classical Luba Kingdom of Central Africa. According to Mary Nooter Roberts and Allen F. Roberts: “Luba people say that only a woman’s body is strong enough to contain a powerful spirit like a king’s, so sculpture dedicated to kingship is almost always female in gender.” (*Memory: Luba Art and the Making of History*, 1996, p. 42) Elaborate hairstyles and complex patterns of scarification on female figures are representative of those actually borne by high-ranking Luba individuals, and fleshy, youthful physiognomy is depicted with flowing, fluid lines and gracefully rounded surfaces.

The depiction of beauty in Luba Art is of moral and religious significance. Like other Central African sculptural traditions, a figural sculpture was thought to be a locus where a spirit might temporarily settle; for the Luba in particular, the beauty of the sculpture would attract desirable spirits, as would a rich assortment of accoutrements, as in the present figure. The present figure poses in a quiet gesture of gesture of meditative reverence, with her hands upon her breasts, and heavily-lidded eyes closed or looking downwards, present in the physical world but connected to the world of spirits.

The highly refined sculpture of the Luba has been admired in the West since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Roberts and Roberts further note that “Because of resonances with European notions of value and ‘elegance’, Luba artistic forms have been celebrated among the greatest of African artistic traditions.” (*Luba*, 2007, p. 12).

For a statue of closely related facial features see a Luba female statue is in the British Museum, London (inv. no. 1910-441, accessioned in 1910, Roberts and Roberts 1997: 84, cat. 31).

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<https://www.sothebys.com/en/buy/auction/2022/art-of-africa-oceania-and-the-americas/luba-female-half-figure-democratic-republic-of-the>





## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



African Art from the Collection of Dr. Austin Newton

52

### Buyu Amulet, Democratic Republic of the Congo

Estimate: 4,000 - 6,000 USD

**DESCRIPTION**

African Art from the Collection of Dr. Austin Newton

Buyu Amulet, Democratic Republic of the Congo

Height (of the head, without leather strip): 3 ½ in (9 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

Jacques Blanckaert, Brussels

Private Collection, acquired by descent from the above  
Sotheby's, Paris, December 11, 2013, lot 84, consigned by the  
above

Austin Newton, Princeton, New Jersey, acquired at the above  
auction

**EXHIBITION**

Princeton University Art Museum, Princeton, New  
Jersey, *Surfaces Seen and Unseen*, July 2 – October 9, 2016

**LITERATURE**

Princeton University Art Museum, ed., *Surfaces Seen and  
Unseen* [Exhibition Checklist], Princeton, 2016, p. 8

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[https://www.sothebys.com/en/buy/auction/2022/art-of-africa-oceania-  
and-the-americas/buyu-amulet-democratic-republic-of-the-congo](https://www.sothebys.com/en/buy/auction/2022/art-of-africa-oceania-and-the-americas/buyu-amulet-democratic-republic-of-the-congo)



## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



African Art from the Collection of Dr. Austin Newton

53

### Luba-Shankadi Staff, Democratic Republic of the Congo

Estimate: 4,000 - 6,000 USD

**DESCRIPTION**

African Art from the Collection of Dr. Austin Newton

Luba-Shankadi Staff, Democratic Republic of the Congo

Length: 37 ½ in (94.3 cm); Height of figure: 6 ½ in (16.5 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

John J. Klejman, New York

Austin Newton, Princeton, New Jersey, acquired from the  
above in the early 1970s

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Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



African Art from the Collection of Dr. Austin Newton

54

The African Art Library of Dr. Austin Newton

Estimate:4,000 - 6,000 USD

Monumental Item

**DESCRIPTION**

African Art from the Collection of Dr. Austin Newton

The African Art Library of Dr. Austin Newton

Comprising approximately 1,000 books, auction catalogues, magazines, and journals.

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## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



Property from the Estate of Lois Frankel, Texas

55

### Bamana Zoomorphic Doorlock, Mali

Estimate: 3,000 - 5,000 USD



## DESCRIPTION

Property from the Estate of Lois Frankel, Texas

Bamana Zoomorphic Doorlock, Mali

Height: 16 ⅞ in (42.2 cm)

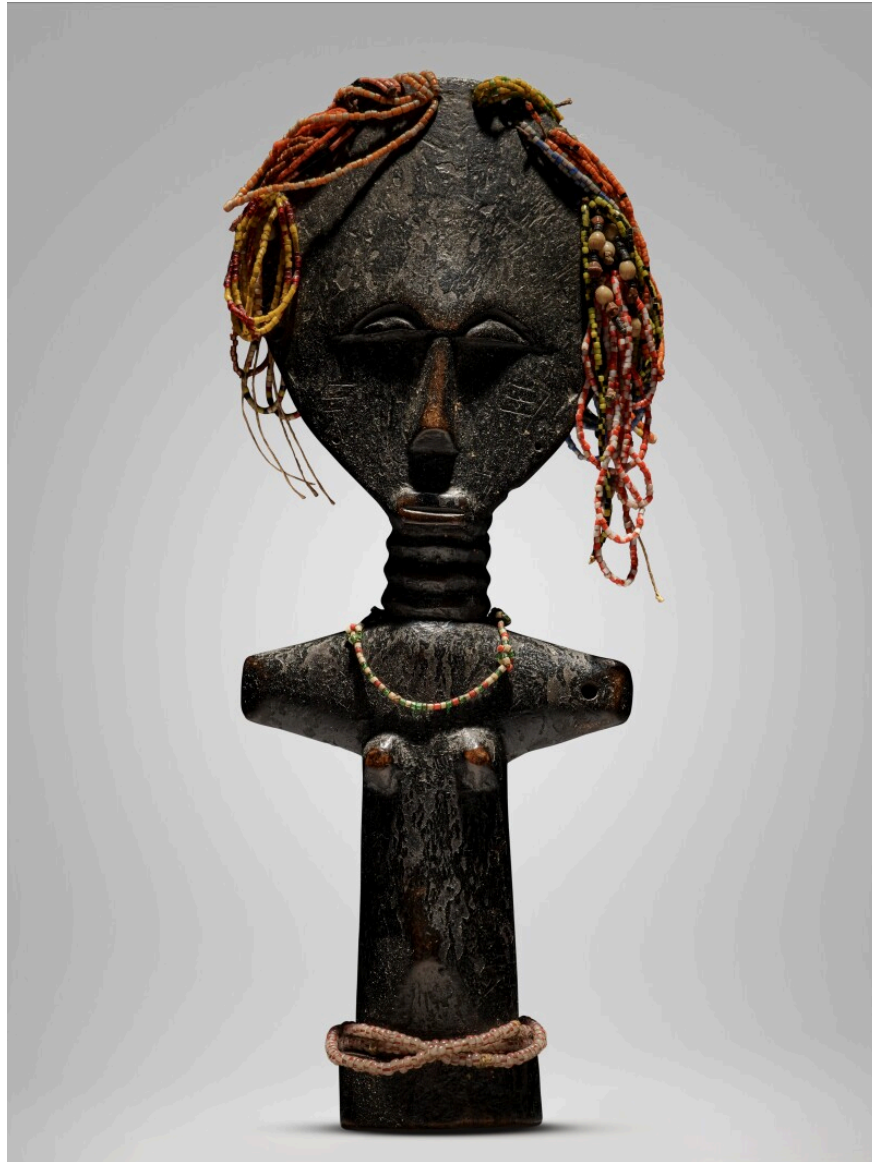
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## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



Property from an American Private Collection

56

### Asante Figure, Ghana

Estimate: 800 - 1,200 USD

**DESCRIPTION**

Property from an American Private Collection

Asante Figure, Ghana

Height: 7 ⅞ in (20 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

American Private Collection, acquired by the early 1970s

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<https://www.sothebys.com/en/buy/auction/2022/art-of-africa-oceania-and-the-americas/asante-figure-ghana>



## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



Works from the Collection of René d'Harnoncourt from the Estate of Joseph J. Rishel

57

### Asante Stool, Ghana

Estimate: 800 - 1,200 USD

**DESCRIPTION**

Works from the Collection of René d'Harnoncourt from the Estate of Joseph J. Rishel

Asante Stool, Ghana

Width: 21 in (53.3 cm); Height: 12 ½ in (31.8 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

René d'Harnoncourt, New York, acquired in London in 1946  
Anne d'Harnoncourt, Philadelphia, acquired by descent from the above  
Joseph J. Rishel, Philadelphia, acquired by descent from the above

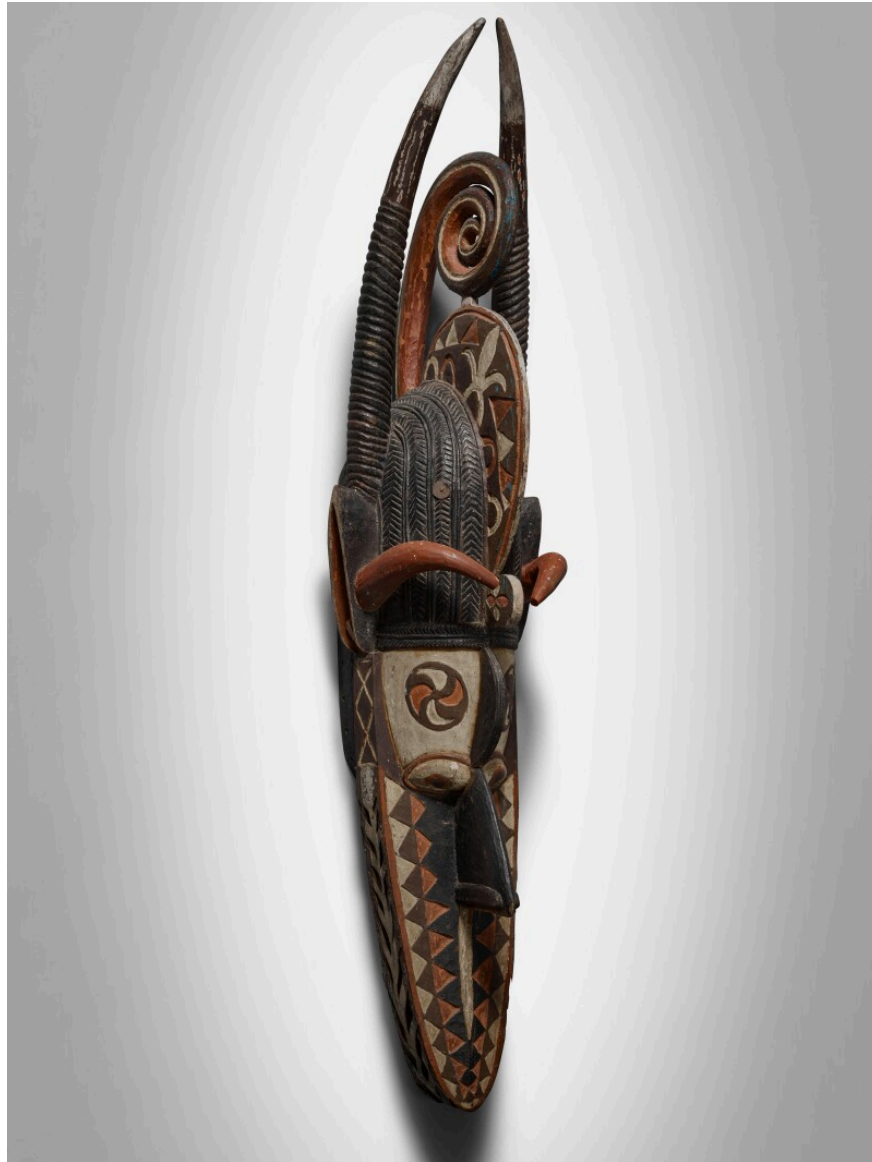
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## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



Property from the Estate of Lois Frankel, Texas

58

### Baga or Nalu Headdress, Guinea

Estimate: 15,000 - 25,000 USD

## DESCRIPTION

Property from the Estate of Lois Frankel, Texas

Baga or Nalu Headdress, Guinea

Length: 63 in (160 cm)

## PROVENANCE

John J. Klejman, New York

Acquired from the above

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<https://www.sothebys.com/en/buy/auction/2022/art-of-africa-oceania-and-the-americas/baga-or-nalu-headdress-guinea>





## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



Property from the Estate of Sara Roosevelt Wilford, New York

### 59 Yaure Mask, Côte d'Ivoire, possibly by Kuakudili

Estimate: 7,000 - 10,000 USD

**DESCRIPTION**

Property from the Estate of Sara Roosevelt Wilford, New York

Yaure Mask, Côte d'Ivoire, possibly by Kuakudili

The reverse with a printed label: "MATHIAS KOMOR WORKS OF ART NEW YORK", inscribed in (faded) black ink: "E.417"

Height: 15 in (38 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

Mathias Komor, New York (inv. no. E.417)

Sara Roosevelt Wilford, New York, presumably acquired from the above

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## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



Property from the Estate of Lois Frankel, Texas

60

### Minianka or Senufo Mask, Mali or Côte d'Ivoire

Estimate: 3,000 - 5,000 USD

## DESCRIPTION

Property from the Estate of Lois Frankel, Texas

Minianka or Senufo Mask, Mali or Côte d'Ivoire

Height: 13 in (33 cm)

## PROVENANCE

Charles Ratton, Paris

Acquired from the above in 1971

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<https://www.sothebys.com/en/buy/auction/2022/art-of-africa-oceania-and-the-americas/senufo-mask-cote-divoire-or-mali>



## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



Property from the Estate of Lois Frankel, Texas

61

### Senufo Mask, Côte d'Ivoire

Estimate: 3,000 - 5,000 USD

**DESCRIPTION**

Property from the Estate of Lois Frankel, Texas

Senufo Mask, Côte d'Ivoire

The reverse of the mask with a printed paper label: "RATTON  
PARIS"

Height: 10 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in (27.3 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

Charles Ratton, Paris

Acquired from the above in 1971

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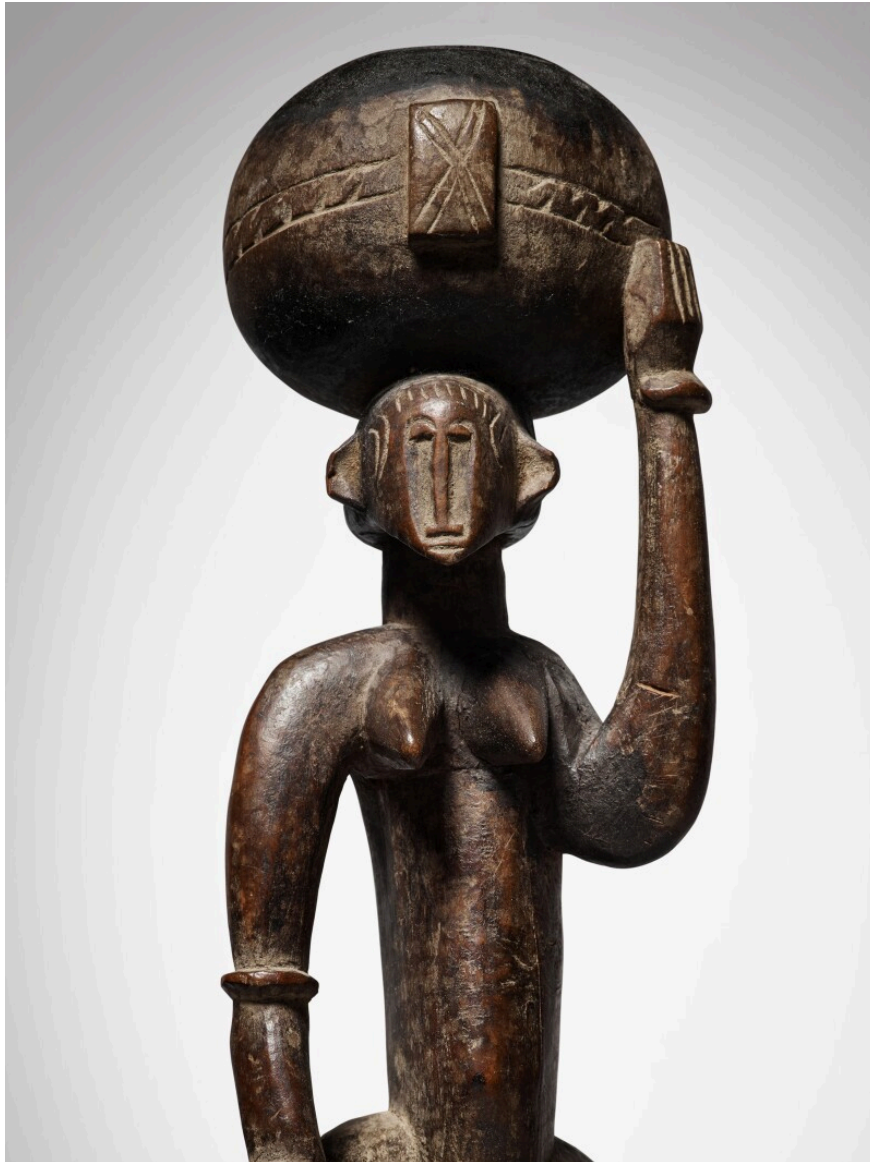
<https://www.sothebys.com/en/buy/auction/2022/art-of-africa-oceania-and-the-americas/senufo-mask-cote-divoire>





## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



Property from an American Private Collection

62

### Senufo Bowl-Bearer Figure, Côte d'Ivoire

Estimate: 10,000 - 15,000 USD



**DESCRIPTION**

Property from an American Private Collection

Senufo Bowl-Bearer Figure, Côte d'Ivoire

Height: 11 ¼ in (28.6 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

Galerie Présence des Arts, Paris

American Private Collection, acquired from the above on  
March 30, 1968

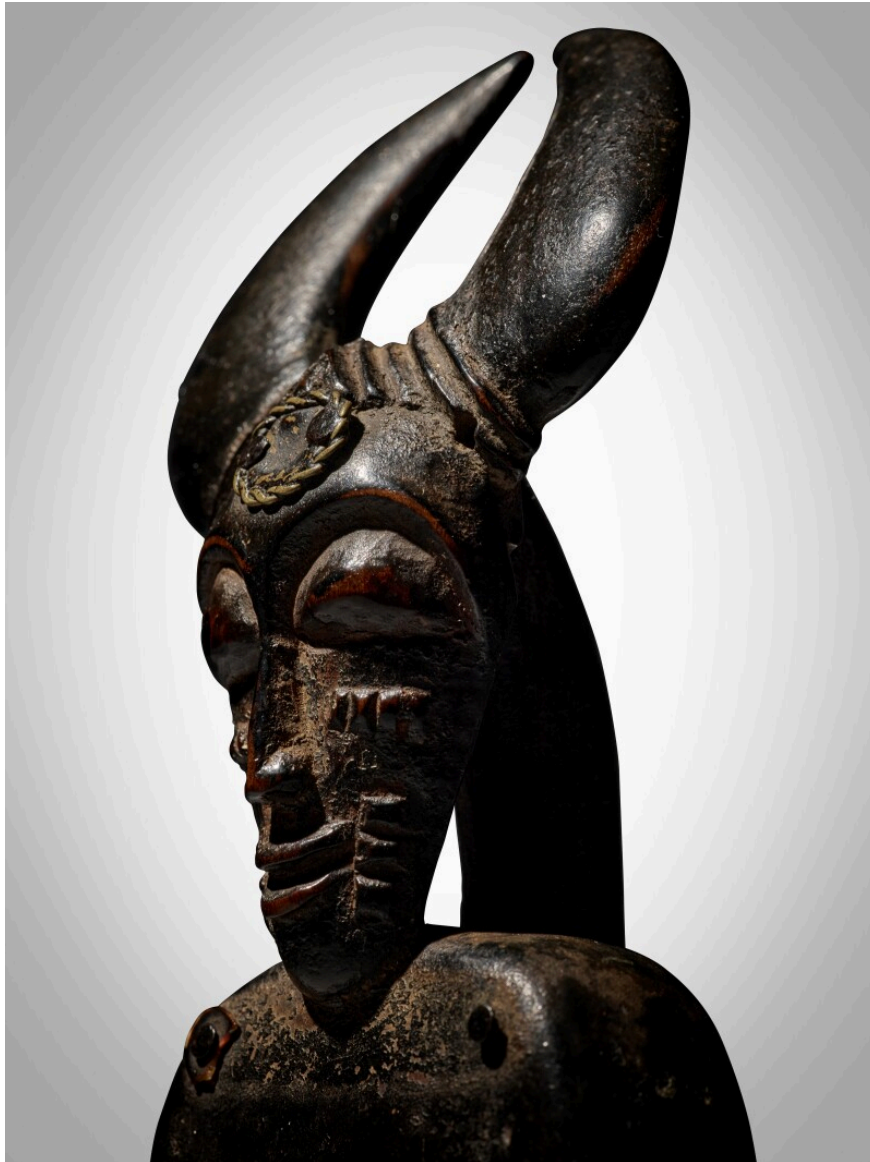
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## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



63

### Djimini or Ligbe Heddle Pulley, Côte d'Ivoire

Estimate: 6,000 - 9,000 USD

## DESCRIPTION

Djimini or Ligbe Heddle Pulley, Côte d'Ivoire

Height: 7 in (17.9 cm)

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<https://www.sothebys.com/en/buy/auction/2022/art-of-africa-oceania-and-the-americas/djimini-or-ligbe-heddle-pulley-cote-divoire>

## PROVENANCE

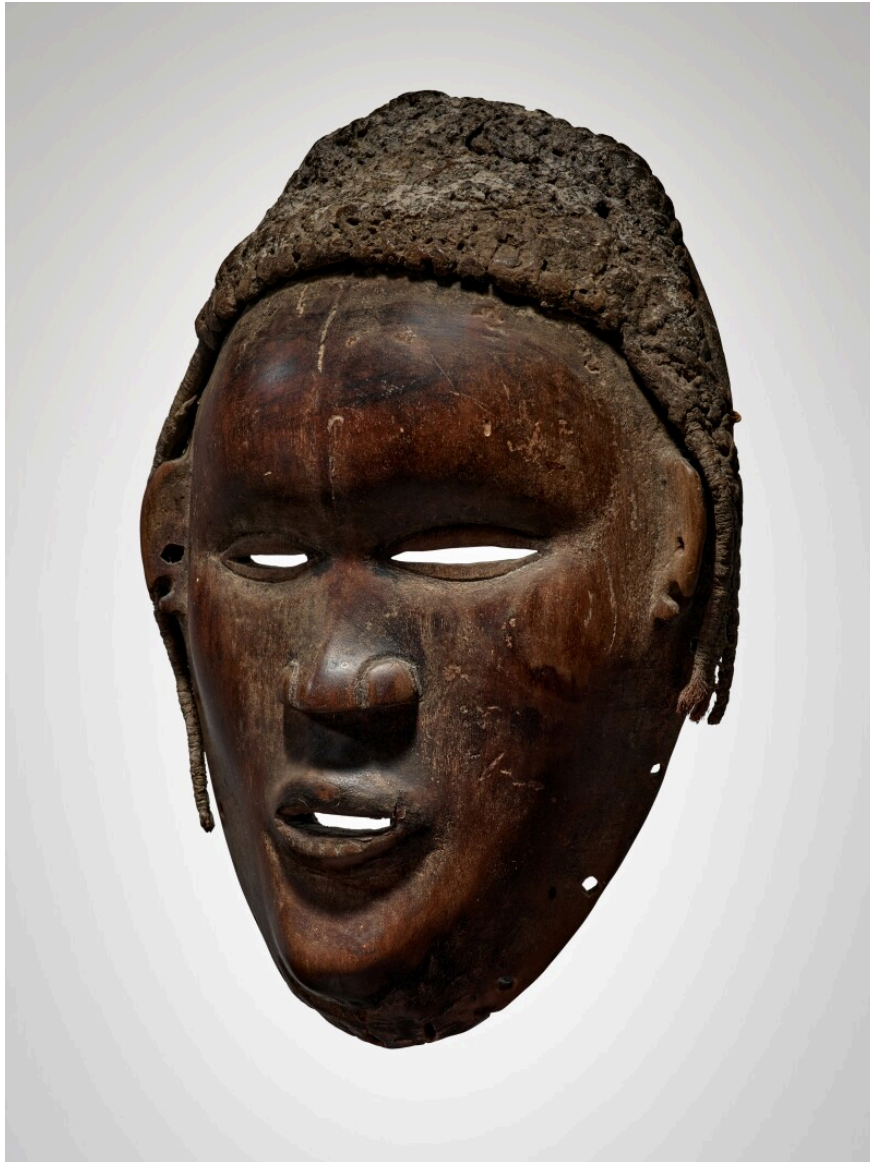
Private Collection, New York

Acquired from the above



## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



Property from the Estate of Lois Frankel, Texas

64

### Dan-Gio or Mano Mask, Liberia

Estimate: 5,000 - 7,000 USD

**DESCRIPTION**

Property from the Estate of Lois Frankel, Texas

Dan-Gio or Mano Mask, Liberia

The reverse of the mask with a printed paper label: "RATTON  
PARIS"

Height: 9 in (22.9 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

Charles Ratton, Paris

Acquired from the above in 1971

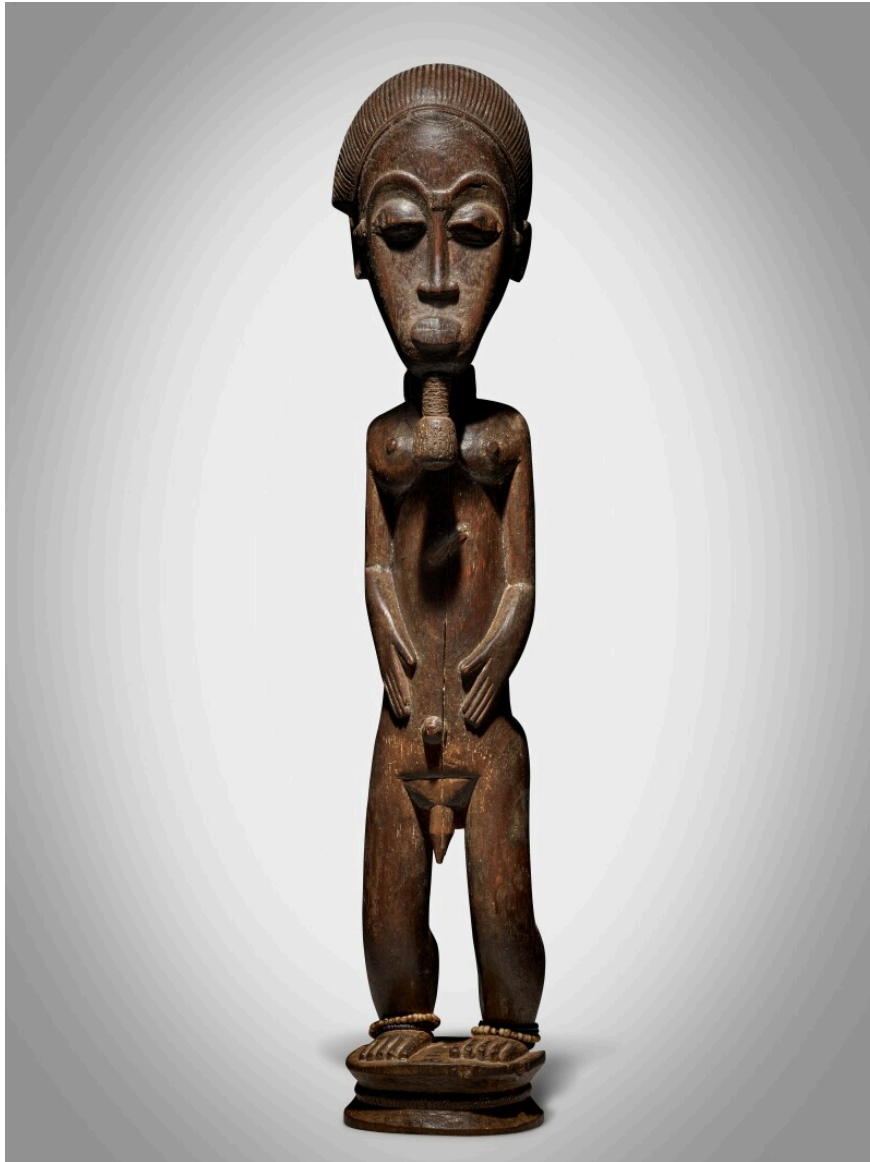
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<https://www.sothebys.com/en/buy/auction/2022/art-of-africa-oceania-and-the-americas/dan-gio-or-mano-mask-liberia>



## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



African Sculpture from the Collection of George Gershwin

65

### Baule Figure, Côte d'Ivoire

Estimate: 20,000 - 30,000 USD

**DESCRIPTION**

African Sculpture from the Collection of George Gershwin

Baule Figure, Côte d'Ivoire

Height: 20 in (50.8 cm)

The reverse with a paper label printed: "RATTON PARIS"

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<https://www.sothebys.com/en/buy/auction/2022/art-of-africa-oceania-and-the-americas/baule-figure-cote-divoire-2>

**PROVENANCE**

Charles Ratton, Paris

George Gershwin, New York, acquired from the above prior to 1937

By descent from the above



## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



Property from an American Private Collection

66

### Baule Figure, Côte d'Ivoire

Estimate: 8,000 - 12,000 USD

**DESCRIPTION**

Property from an American Private Collection

Baule Figure, Côte d'Ivoire

Height: 17 in (43.2 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

American Private Collection, acquired by the early 1970s

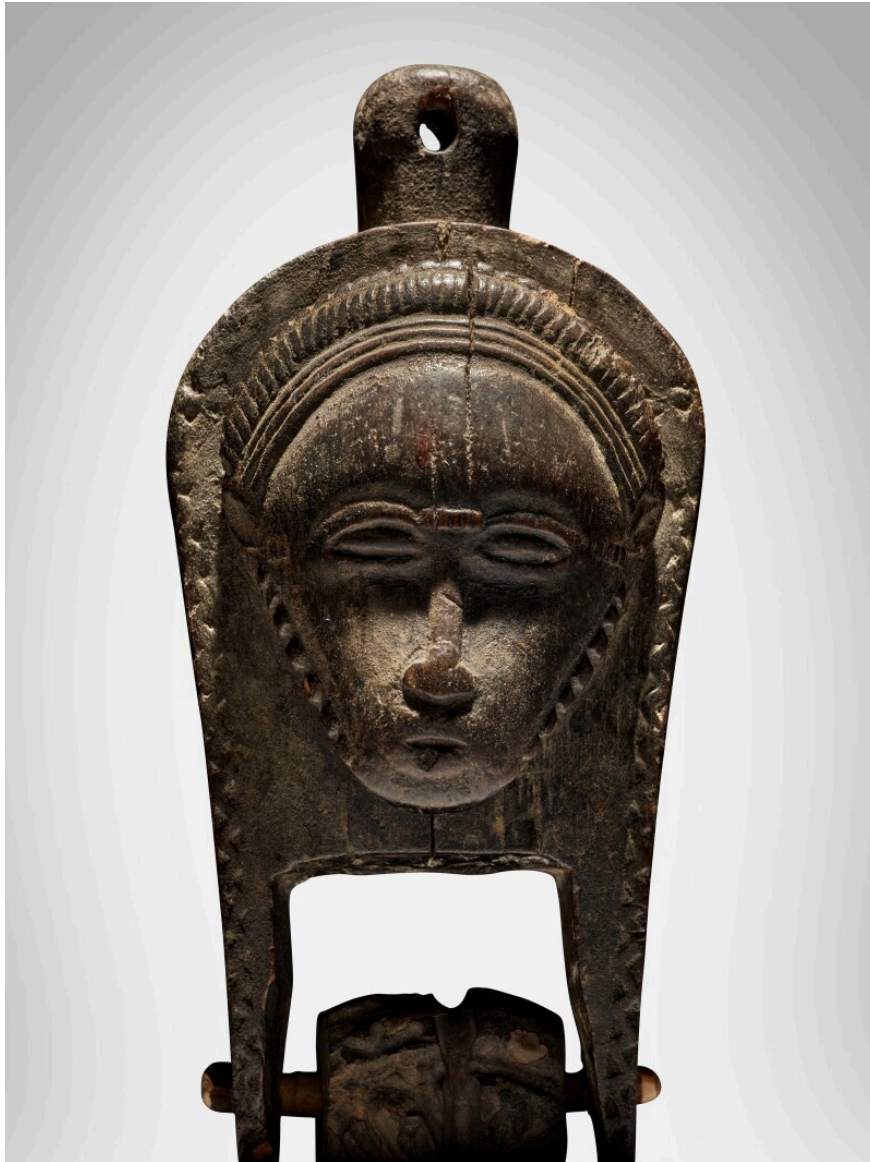
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## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



Property from an American Private Collection

67

### Baule Heddle Pulley, Côte d'Ivoire

Estimate: 2,000 - 3,000 USD

**DESCRIPTION**

Property from an American Private Collection

Baule Heddle Pulley, Côte d'Ivoire

Height: 4 7/8 in (12.4 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

American Private Collection, acquired by the early 1970s

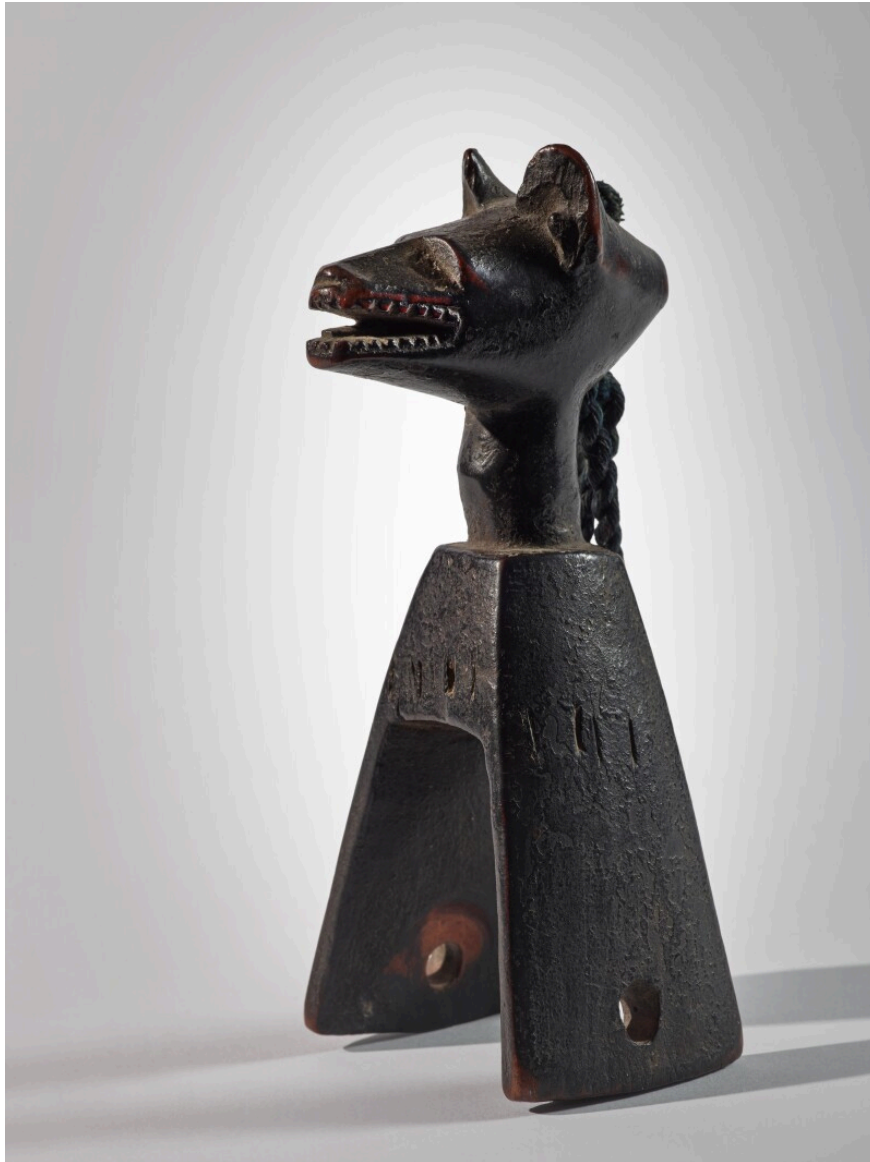
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## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



Property from an American Private Collection

68

### Guro Heddle Pulley, Côte d'Ivoire

Estimate: 4,000 - 6,000 USD

**DESCRIPTION**

Property from an American Private Collection

Guro Heddle Pulley, Côte d'Ivoire

The reverse with an old paper label inscribed in faded black ink: "Zouénoula", and with another word faintly visible but undeciphered.

Height: 5 ½ in (14 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

Maître Etienne Ader, Hôtel Drouot, Paris, March 14, 1963, lot 110

American Private Collection, acquired by the early 1970s

**CATALOGUE NOTE**

Despite its canine-like appearance, this splendid old heddle pulley probably depicts a bat. Anne-Marie Bouttiaux notes, "bats (*ban*) often figure on small items such as spoons or loom pulleys. This animal is related to divination techniques because its nocturnal habits and navigational skills suggest it has occult powers." (Bouttiaux, *Guro*, Milan, 2016).

An old paper label attached to the back of the pulley is inscribed with the word Zouénoula which, besides being the name of a town and department in central Côte d'Ivoire, was the term by which Paul Guillaume referred to certain Guro or Bete-Guro objects that he sold from the beginning of the 1920s; objects which Guillaume identified as Zouénoula (with corresponding labels or inscriptions) include a superb Guro mask from the Robert and Lisa Sainsbury Collection at the Sainsbury Centre, University of East Anglia, Norwich (inv. no. 213), and a Guro mask sold at Sotheby's, Paris, December 4, 2008, lot 134.

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## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



Property from the Collection of Isadore and Nancy Marder

69

### Baule Male and Female Couple, Côte d'Ivoire

Estimate: 8,000 - 12,000 USD



**DESCRIPTION**

Property from the Collection of Isadore and Nancy Marder

Baule Male and Female Couple, Côte d'Ivoire

Height of male figure: 19 ¾ in (49.2 cm); Height of female figure: 19 in (48.3 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

Albert F. Gordon, New York

Isadore and Nancy Marder, Merion Station, Pennsylvania,  
acquired from the above on March 18, 1972

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## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



Property from a Private Collection, New York

70

### Igala Helmet Mask, Nigeria

Estimate: 12,000 - 18,000 USD

**DESCRIPTION**

Property from a Private Collection, New York

Igala Helmet Mask, Nigeria

Height: 13 in (33 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

European Private Collection

Sotheby's, New York, May 15, 2003, lot 34, consigned by the above

Private Collection, New York, acquired at the above auction

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## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



Property from an American Private Collection

71

### Bamileke Beaded Helmet Mask, Grassfields, Cameroon

Estimate: 2,000 - 3,000 USD

☐ No Reserves

**DESCRIPTION**

Property from an American Private Collection

Bamileke Beaded Helmet Mask, Grassfields, Cameroon

Length: 52 ½ in (133.4 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

American Private Collection

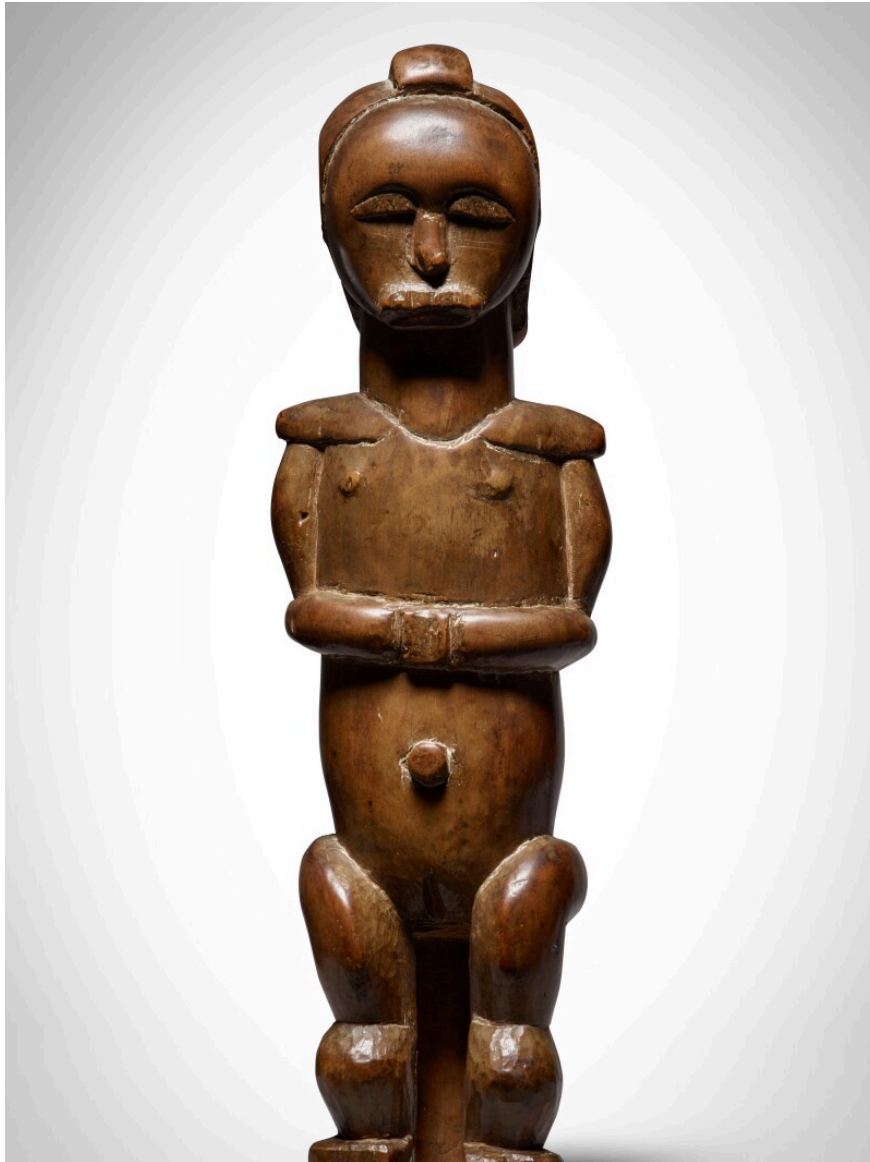
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## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



African Sculpture from the Collection of George Gershwin

72

### Fang Reliquary Guardian Figure, Gabon

Estimate: 20,000 - 30,000 USD



**DESCRIPTION**

African Sculpture from the Collection of George Gershwin

Fang Reliquary Guardian Figure, Gabon

Height: 14 in (35.6 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

George Gershwin, New York, acquired between 1929 and 1936

Thence by descent from the above

**CATALOGUE NOTE**

This small Fang figure was acquired by the great American composer George Gershwin between 1929 and 1936, a time when Fang (then most often called “Pahouin”) sculpture enjoyed a particular vogue among avant-garde American collectors, with the 1932 exhibition of Paul Guillaume’s collection at the Durand-Ruel Gallery in New York (*Early African Heads and Statues from the Gabon Pahouin Tribes*), and the historic *African Negro Art* exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in 1935. In January of the following year, the painter, collector, and theorist John D. Graham organized the pioneering *Exhibition of Sculptures of Old African Civilizations*, to which George Gershwin was a lender, at the Jacques Seligmann Gallery in New York. The slim catalogue that accompanied the exhibition contains Graham’s lapidary observations on the qualities he perceived in African sculpture. Of the “Pahouin Civilization”, Graham observed “an art – justly called classical. Its abstractions are the result of profound and final argumentation.” (John D. Graham, *Exhibition of Sculpture of Old African Civilizations*, New York, 1936, p. 10). Graham viewed Fang sculpture as “classical” because he believed it to be “an art that has finally formulated and realized its plastic aspirations, an art, in short, that is definitely poised [...]” (*ibid.*, p. 7).

While Graham was concerned with a purely aesthetic approach, the plastic qualities of Fang sculpture exemplify deeper cultural meanings, several of which are embodied in this sculpture. The rounded head of this figure is of “classical” form, with a slightly downcast and almost quiescent face that bears a deeply meditative expression, which embodies the Fang qualities of *nlem mvore*, or composure, and *mvwaa*, or tranquil equilibrium. The abrasions to the nose and the mouth are evidence of ritual scrapings which “were intentionally wrought upon such works throughout their ritual lives.” (Alisa LaGamma, ed., *Eternal Ancestors: The Art of the Central African Reliquary*, New York, 2007, p. 208). The sense of introspective containment is also conveyed in the body of the sculpture, with the rounded masses of the shoulders and arms clasped tightly to the torso, and the hands held together in a votive gesture below the heart. The clear



delineation of the joints of the shoulders, arms, and legs denotes the transition from one generation of ancestors to the next (J. W. Fernandez, *Bwiti: An Ethnography of the Religious Imagination in Africa*, Princeton, 1982, p. 88).

Although the precise source of this sculpture is not recorded, its style corresponds closely with that of a reliquary figure acquired in Paris in the 1930s by the Swiss collector Josef Mueller (see Christie's, London, *The Collection of the Late Josef Mueller, of Solothurn, Switzerland [...], Part II*, March 20, 1979, lot 138).

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## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



Property from the Estate of Lois Frankel, Texas

73

### Kota-Obamba Reliquary Guardian Figure, Gabon

Estimate: 20,000 - 30,000 USD

**DESCRIPTION**

Property from the Estate of Lois Frankel, Texas

Kota-Obamba Reliquary Guardian Figure, Gabon

The reverse with a printed label: "MATHIAS KOMOR WORKS OF ART NEW YORK", inscribed in black ink: "6 464"

Height: 24 ½ in (62.2 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

Mathias Komor, New York (inv. no. 6. 464)

Paul Breslow, New York, acquired from the above

Pace Primitive and Ancient Art, New York, acquired from the estate of the above

Acquired from the above

**CATALOGUE NOTE**

Louis Perrois, the scholar of the art of Gabon, has remarked upon the “classicism” of this type of Kota-reliquary figure, which he attributes to the Kota-Obamba or -Ndumu, and which “have been found since the end of the nineteenth century in the upper Ogooué area” (Louis Perrois, *Kota*, Milan, 2012, p. 60).

This “classicism” is illustrated here by the formal rigour of the composition. The concave, oval face has vertical and horizontal axes composed of plates of brass, which are surrounded by copper strips arranged in diagonal and horizontal lines that draw one’s eye to the centre of the sculpture, where the features are placed, with a triangular nose and horizontal crescent eyes executed in high relief. The crimped edges of the copper strips create the appearance of raised bands, which again draw the eye inwards. The crowning crescent and the curved “cheeks”, or *abaa*, are encased in brass plates with striated bands around most of the perimeter, with a double band of lozenge motifs at the base of the cheeks, a design that is reprised in the band that encircles the neck. The artist has exploited the chromatic qualities of contrasting different metals, with two strips of iron forming “tears” that run diagonally down from beneath either eye, and a spiral copper pendant beneath either cheek.

Alisa LaGamma writes of the appeal to Kota patrons of “the reflective properties of the metal surface. [...] The constantly changing effect of shimmering light on the polished metal surface was evocative of the play of light on water. This was an especially appropriate quality given that the ancestral realm was conceived of as a body of water.” (Alisa LaGamma, ed., *Eternal Ancestors: The Art of the Central African Reliquary*, New York, 2007, p. 110).

For a similar Kota-Obamba sculpture, see the example once in the Frank Crowninshield collection and sold at Sotheby’s, New York, *The Collection of Edwin and Cherie Silver*, November 13, 2017, lot 23.

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## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



Property from a Private Collection

74

### Songye-Eki Figural Neckrest, Democratic Republic of the Congo

Estimate: 100,000 - 150,000 USD

**DESCRIPTION**

Property from a Private Collection

Songye-Eki Figural Neckrest, Democratic Republic of the Congo

Height: 6 in (15.2 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

William Douglas McMillan and Helen Lucille Henry McMillan, acquired *in situ* between 1918-1930

Thence by descent

Acquired from the above

**CATALOGUE NOTE**

This rediscovered figural headrest is a sublime exemplar of Central African sculpture, long pre-dating abstract artistic concepts "discovered" in the West in the 20th century. It is a fusion of two great styles of Congolese sculpture: Luba and Songye. It takes the format of a luxurious and sacred status object, of a type which reached its apex in the pre-colonial Luba Kingdom. The body of the caryatid figure is formed with a surreal sculptural vocabulary that is distinctly Songye, however, both in morphology and in its sheer inventiveness. Large, flat, paddle-shaped feet are instantly recognizable as Songye, like those of their famous Power Figures (*nkisi*). The legs are short, fleshy, and charged, with a slight bend at the knee. Above the small suggestion of a rounded belly, the body becomes an abstract column, rising to support the lateral headrest in a pure geometric vertical without further description of figural features. At the back of the "neck" is a carefully formed aperture where a cord for carrying could be attached. The armless column therefore reads as the body of the figure, while the "head" is seemingly missing, or signified by the lateral "pillow". The sculptor may have intended an ingenious conceit connected to the function of the object: the sculpture becomes complete when the user rests their head upon it.

Sculptural headrests are used throughout Sub-Saharan Africa and in many other parts of the world as ceremonial objects with the functional purpose of supporting a person's head in repose. In many African traditions, the object takes the form of a lateral support resting atop the head of a standing figure (the female of which is known as a caryatid, the male as an atlantid, in ancient Greek and later Western art history). Beyond their functional purpose, these figural headrests carry rich artistic meaning and sacred significance: for their original owners, they could be objects of high status, regalia of royalty or other high-ranking individuals, and were often exquisitely-carved. In the canons of African Art, they are among the most highly prized objects and have iconic status, particularly in the classical art of the Congo River Basin. Artists such as the Master of the Cascading Coiffure, the Master of Mulango, and the

Master of Buli created neckrests as tour-de-force showcases of their sculptural prowess.

The Luba used headrests during sleep for the practical purpose of preserving elaborate hair arrangements. According to François Neyt, “Among the Luba, as soon as night falls, the universe is peopled with spirits and beings who seem to fear the heat of the sun. These beings, good or evil, seem to take advantage of the nocturnal respite to communicate with humans. Dreams, therefore, are taken very seriously and often, for those who experience them, they are more real than the reality of everyday life. On some works, figures [...] watch over the resting person to protect him during the mysterious hours of the night. The dreamer also participates in a [state] that one could compare to a hallucination, a trance state, or a state of consciousness modified by a hallucinogenic drug [...] Recourse to a diviner priest is essential. The dreamer somehow participates in a second state in which man becomes receptive to a message from elsewhere.” (François Neyt, *Luba. Aux sources du fleuve Congo*, Paris, 1993, p. 183).

While Luba examples are relatively numerous, figural Songye headrests are extremely rare. Two now-famous Songye headrests were among the earliest Songye artworks to be “discovered” by the outside world: one now on display in the Pavillon des Sessions at the Louvre (inv. no. 73.1986.1.3), and one sold in these rooms in 2013 (Sotheby's, Paris, June 18, 2013, lot 67) and again in 2021 (Sotheby's, Paris, November 30, 2021, lot 177). Both of these sculptures were collected by Captain F. Vandeveld before 1888, and published in 1892. At that time, the art of the Songye people was virtually unknown to the outside world with only a few works existing in German museums, which von Wissman had collected during his campaigns in the Eki and Northern Songye regions between 1881 and 1886 (François Neyt, *Songye: The Formidable Statuary of Central Africa*, Antwerp, 2004, p. 31). To 19th century observers, the appearance of these works sparked observations about the affinities between Sub-Saharan African culture and that of the Ancient Egyptians, where headrests were found in royal tombs, a connection

which is still discussed today (see Diana Craig Patch and Alisa LaGamma, *The African Origin of Civilization: The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, vol. 79, no. 4, Spring, 2022, p. 34).

In the limited corpus of Songye neckrests, a well-known group are attributed to the Songye-Eki (or Beneki) style, as defined by François Neyt (*Songye: The Formidable Statuary of Central Africa*, Antwerp, 2004, pp. 308-312), and to a Nsapo-Nsapo master sculptor known as the Master of Eki (or Master of Beneki). Headrests by this artist or his workshops have been canonized by their accession to major museum collections in Europe and the United States throughout the 20th century: one is in the Staatliches Museum für Völkerkunde, Dresden (inv. no. 41950); three are in the Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren (one acquired by Joseph Maes in Lusambo and published by him in *Les appuis-tête du Congo belge*, Tervuren, 1929, pl. VII, fig. 11); one from the Wellcome Collection is now in the British Museum, London (inv. no. Af1954,+23.1758); one is at the Fowler Museum at UCLA, Los Angeles (see William J. Dewey, *Sleeping Beauties: The Jerome L. Joss Collection of African Headrests at UCLA*, Los Angeles, 1993, p. 65, cat. no. 57; reportedly from a “Belgian Colonial Collection”; another from the Joss Collection at the Fowler seems to be by the workshop or a follower); one is at The Stanley Museum of Art, Iowa City (see Robbins and Nooter *African Art in American Collections, Survey, 1989*, Washington, D.C., 1989, p. 468, fig. 1205); one is in the Dallas Museum of Art (inv. no. 1969.S.189); one is in the Minneapolis Institute of Art (inv. no. 99.139.6); one is in The Detroit Institute of Arts (inv. no. 1983.27); one is in the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Philadelphia (acquired from William O. Oldman of London, in 1912); and another is in the High Museum of Art, Atlanta (inv. no. 2002.309). Another of early provenance which relates to this corpus is in the Barnes Foundation, Philadelphia; it was acquired by Albert C. Barnes from Paul Guillaume in 1922 (inv. no. A187, see Paul Guillaume and Thomas Munro, *Primitive Negro Sculpture*, London, 1926, p. 21, cat. no. 3a).



The large, flat feet carved in high relief on the present headrest relate closely to the corpus of the so-called Master of Eki. However, the visionary artist who created the present example departed from that fleshy, rounded figural style and created an abstract concept of which only one other example is known: a neckrest from the collection of the Belgian artist-collector Jean-Willy Mestach (see Evan Maurer, *The Intelligence of Forms: An Artist Collects African Art*, Minneapolis, 1991, p. 81, cat. no. 60). The Mestach example bears smaller feet and a less elaborate "pillow" as compared with the present work, and poker-work circles dot the top (as in several of the Master of Eki examples). The early collecting dates for many of the Master of Eki works corroborate the family history through which we trace the ownership of the present headrest, which was acquired in the Congo by the American mining engineer William Douglas McMillan, who arrived in the region sometime after 1914, returning to the United States by 1930; this extraordinary neckrest remained in the McMillan family until its recent rediscovery.

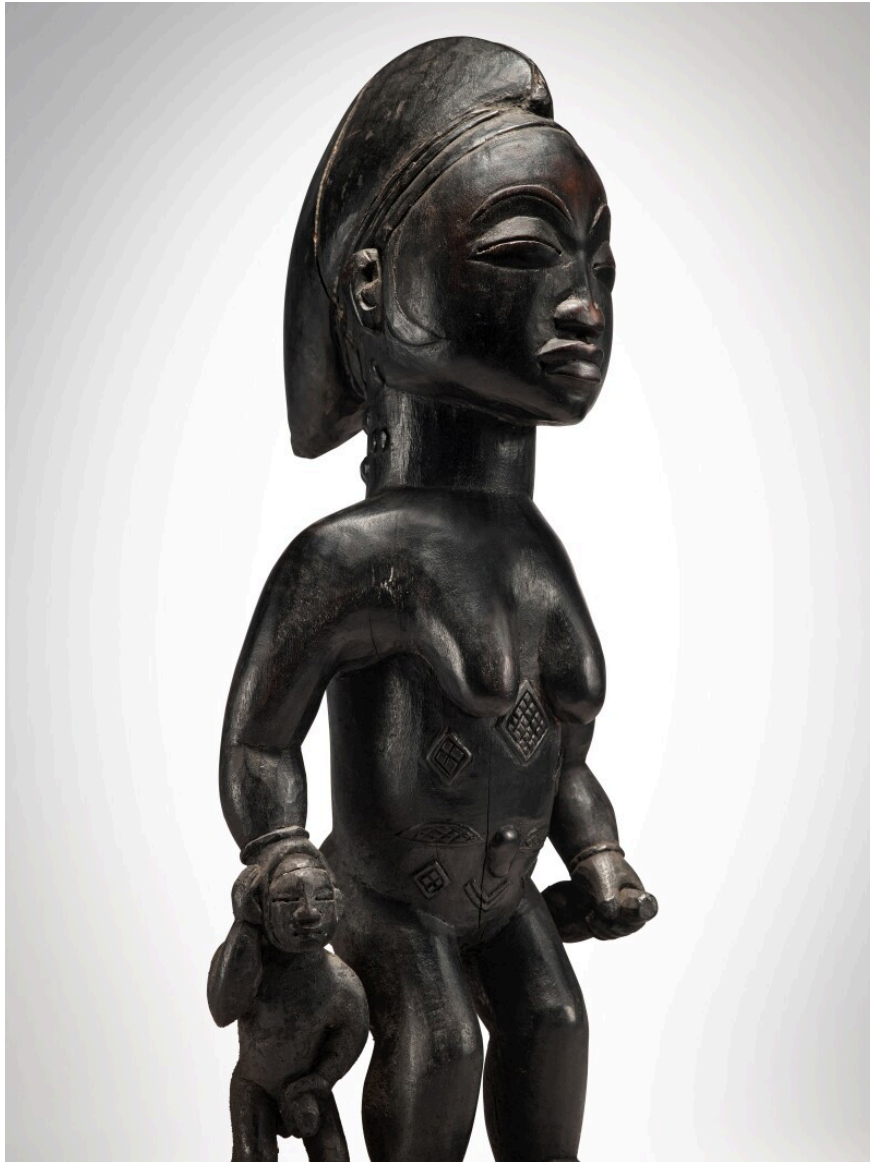
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## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



75

### Lumbo Mother and Child Figure, Gabon

Estimate: 8,000 - 12,000 USD

**DESCRIPTION**

Property from a Private Collection

Lumbo Mother and Child Figure, Gabon

Height: 13 ¼ in (33.6 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

Possibly Paul Guillaume, Paris

Marius de Zayas, New York, possibly acquired from the above  
John Quinn, New York, acquired from the above on September 16, 1918

American Art Association, New York, *The John Quinn Collection: Paintings and Sculptures of the Moderns*, February 9-12, 1927, lot 644

Rose Kirstein, New York, acquired at the above auction  
Lincoln Kirstein, New York, and Weston, Connecticut, acquired from the above

Private Collection, acquired by descent from the above

**LITERATURE**

Theodore E. Stebbins, Jr., and Norman Keyes, Jr., *Charles Sheeler: The Photographs*, Boston, 1987, pl. 1  
Wendy A. Grossman, ed., *Man Ray, African Art, and the Modernist Lens*, Washington, D.C. and Minneapolis, 2009, p. 33, fig. 2.3 and p. 57

Yaëlle Biro, "The John Quinn Collection of African Art and Its Photographic Album by Charles Sheeler", *Tribal Art*, Special Issue No. 3, 2012, p. 44, fig. 43

*Art & Antiques*, February, 2013, cover

Khristaan D. Villela, "From Ivory Coast to the East Coast", *Pasatiempo: The [Santa Fe] New Mexican's Weekly Magazine of Arts, Entertainment & Culture*, April 26, 2013, p. 39

Yaëlle Biro, "African Art, New York, and the Avant-Garde", *African Arts*, Vol. 46, No. 2, Summer, 2013, p. 93, fig. 14

Charlotte Grand-Dufay, "Lumbu Statuary: A Refined Art Style Revealed in the Early Twentieth Century", *Tribal Art*, Vol. XIX, No. 4, [No. 77], Autumn, 2015, p. 114, figs. 1-2

Charlotte Grand-Dufay, *Les Lumbu. Un art sacré. bungeelë yi bayisi*, Paris, 2016, pp. 110-111, fig. 73 (a, b)

Kobena Mercer, *Alain Locke and the Visual Arts*, New Haven, 2022, p. 62, fig. 33

**CATALOGUE NOTE**

A testimony of the subtle art of the Lumbo that was revealed at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this figure is one of the first examples of Lumbo art to appear in the United States, along with the figure in the Cincinnati Art Museum (inv. no. 1890.1545), which was collected in the 1880s by the trader Carl Steckelman.

The provenance of the present sculpture can be traced back to Marius de Zayas, the Mexican artist and dealer who was supplied with African sculptures by Paul Guillaume, the herald of the avant-garde and one of the first dealers and promoters of African art in Paris. This exceptional Lumbo sculpture was presented as a prestigious centrepiece in the opening plate of the now famous photo album of 1919 that immortalized the African art collection of John Quinn (1870-1924), "the man from New York", patron of Joseph Conrad and W. B. Yeats, and one of the great avant-garde collectors of the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1919 Quinn commissioned the Modernist painter and photographer Charles Sheeler (1883-1965) to photograph his collection of African sculptures in an album that contains 27 plates, which illustrate a total of 31 works of art. Three copies of the album were produced, but two are presumed lost; the sole remaining copy is in the Lane Collection at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Lifted from ethnographic pictorial conventions and enhanced by the thoughtful play of light and shadow, this Lumbo mother and child appears, majestically, at the forefront of the image, along with five Baga, Baule, and Senufo sculptures from Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire. The sculpture appears again, photographed alone, in plate VII of the album.

Imbued with spirituality, the standing mother rests her right hand on the head of her son, while in her other hand she holds a small vessel, a calabash gourd. Her hands full, she stands firmly on flexed legs. According to Fredrik Buytendijk, the preeminent specialist of Kongo gestures, her stance indicates a sense of duty. Indeed, among the Kongo people, her posture would suggest a sense of powerful determination; she is roused and compelled to answer a specific calling.

The mother's majestic head is exaggerated in proportion to her body and legs, in keeping with the Bantu tradition. Her coiffure has a large, rounded crest which is unadorned save for a raised central ridge which ends in a point at the nape of the neck, while her temples are framed by finely carved kiss curls. These curls are an essential detail of Kongo sculpture and may be found on several figures, notably a Lumbo female figure that holds calabash vessels in either hand at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (inv. no. 1978.412.296). The same motif is present on a sculpture which entered the collection of the Etnografiska museet, Stockholm, before 1900; on a figure holding calabashes that was acquired in 1905 by the Ethnologisches Museum, Berlin (inv. no. IIIC20277); and on a mask from the collection of Marceau Rivière (Sotheby's, Paris, *Collection Marceau Rivière*, June 18-19, 2019, lot 71).

The mother's features are characteristic of Lumbo sculpture, with her face framed by arched eyebrows carved in relief. The wings of the fine nose are rounded, and rest above full, pursed lips. Her prominent neck is adorned with small double-pointed keloid scarifications. Her shoulders are powerful, her chest is raised, and her stomach bears diamond-shaped scarification patterns, with two bands of crosshatched designs at the waist, either side of the prominent umbilicus, which is another Lumbo characteristic. The ritual sign of the diamond is an important symbolic element for all the cultures of the equatorial Atlantic coastal region of Africa, from Congo to Gabon. It is the primordial motif and founding mythical emblem of the people of the Ogooué basin, representing a gateway to both life and death, the female sex, and the origin of the world.

Slightly parted, her legs rest on wide "rake"-like feet, in a style typical of Kongo sculpture. The neatly carved toenails reveal the hand of a great sculptor. The carved bands that adorn the mother's ankles and wrists symbolize both wealth and contact with the ancestors. Associated with healing and divination rites, the calabash vessels that the figure holds in her hand may hold remedies or powerful *lebika* ingredients, intended

to repel a sorcerer or an enemy of society; this figure is a *nkisi mulebika*, which served as "medicine", reinforcing the social order of the community.

Distinguished by this gesture of an offering that honoured the ancestors, female figures that hold one or two calabash vessels are among the oldest known examples of Lumbo sculpture. Indeed, the figures in the Ethnologisches Museum, Berlin (inv. no. IIIC20277), and the Museum für Völkerkunde, Hamburg (inv. no. C 1811) were acquired by 1905 and 1893 respectively. Like the present sculpture, those two figures are also characterized by their beautiful, fine-featured faces and their jewellery, including bracelets and anklets. The numerous similarities in the proportions, posture, coiffure, and double-point scarification of the present sculpture and the figure that holds calabash vessels in either hand at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (inv. no. 1978.412.296) suggest that the two works may be the work of the same master sculptor. Published in my article in *Tribal Art* magazine in 2015 and in the monograph *Les Lumbo. un art sacré* in 2017, this mother and child figure reveals the masterful, refined and "classic" art of the Lumbo, part of the great tradition of Kongo culture. A Lumbo masterpiece by a great sculptor, this mother and child figure is in all respects a historic work.

Charlotte Grand-Dufay

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## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



Property from a Private Collection, New York

76

### Kongo-Yombe Maternity Figure, Democratic Republic of the Congo

Estimate: 6,000 - 9,000 USD

☐ No Reserves



**DESCRIPTION**

Property from a Private Collection, New York

Kongo-Yombe Maternity Figure, Democratic Republic of the Congo

Height: 14 ¼ in (36.2 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

Private Collection

Sotheby's, London, November 28 and 30, 1983, lot 147,  
consigned by the above

Private Collection, Brussels, acquired at the above auction  
Sotheby's, London, July 11, 1988, lot 104, consigned by the  
above

Reynold C. Kerr, New York, acquired after the above auction  
Merton D. Simpson, New York (inv. no. 4255), acquired from  
the above circa 1990

Loudmer, Paris, June 30, 1994, lot 369

French Trade, acquired after the above auction

Alain Naoum, Brussels, acquired from the above

Marc Leo Felix, Brussels, acquired from the above

Private Collection, Minnesota, acquired from the above circa  
1996

Sotheby's, New York, November 18, 2000, lot 150, consigned  
by the above

Lucien van de Velde, Antwerp, acquired after the above auction

Private Collection, New York, acquired from the above on July  
25, 2002

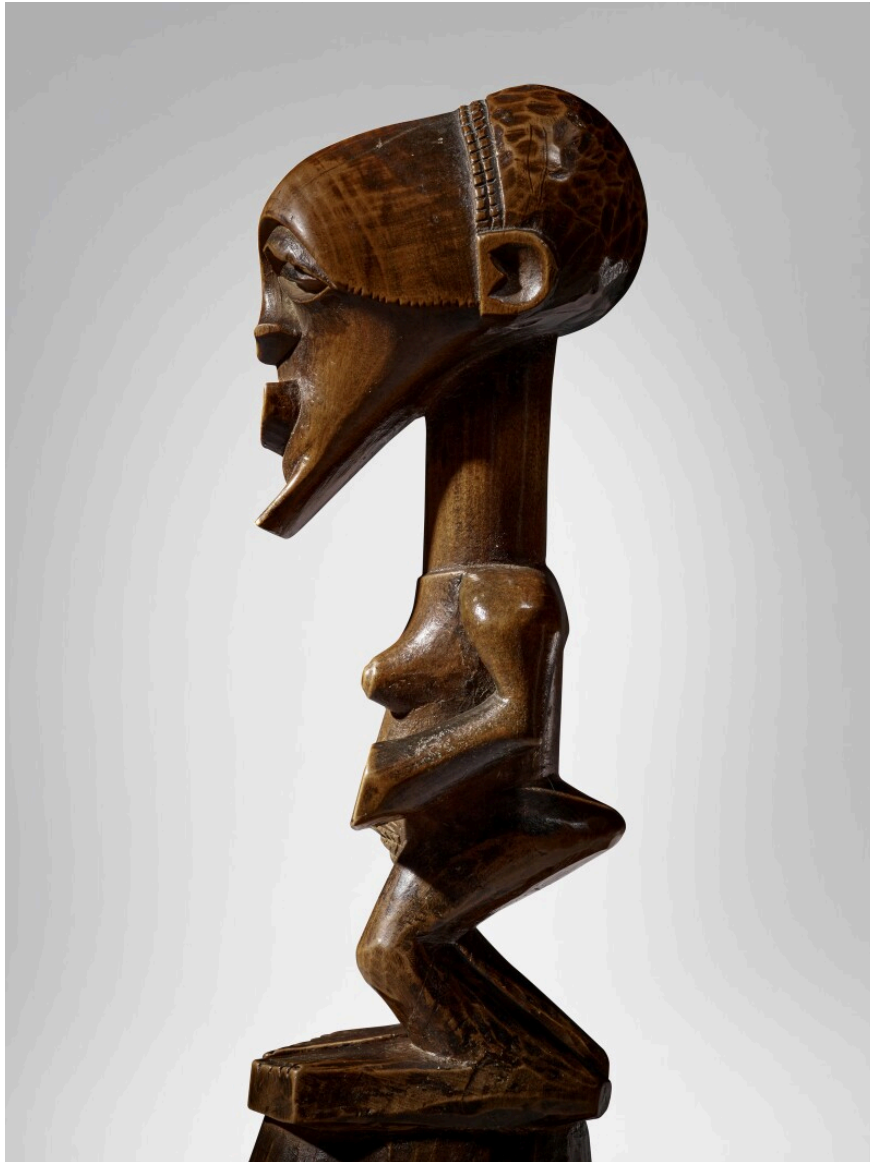
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## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



Property from a Private Collection, New York

77

### Songye Figure, Democratic Republic of Congo

Estimate: 3,000 - 5,000 USD

☐ No Reserves



**DESCRIPTION**

Property from a Private Collection, New York

Songye Figure, Democratic Republic of Congo

Height: 8 in (20.3 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

G. M. J. Lommen, Maastricht

Martha J. Ehrlich, Edwardsville, Illinois

Thomas Alexander, St. Louis, acquired from the above

John Giltsoff, London

Private Collection, New York, acquired from the above on

December 8, 1996

**EXHIBITION**

Bruce Museum, Greenwich, Connecticut, *Three African Traditions: The Art of the Dogon, Fang and Songye*, January 31 - April 18, 1999

**LITERATURE**

Allen Wardwell, *Three African Traditions: The Art of the Dogon, Fang and Songye*, Greenwich, Connecticut, 1999, p. 17, pl. 39

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## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



Works from the Collection of René d'Harnoncourt from the Estate of Joseph J. Rishel

78

### Necklace, Hawaiian Islands

Estimate: 40,000 - 60,000 USD

● Restricted Species

## DESCRIPTION

Works from the Collection of René d'Harnoncourt from the Estate of Joseph J. Rishel

Necklace, Hawaiian Islands

Walrus ivory (*Odobenus rosmarus*)

Length (overall): 11 ½ in (29.2 cm); Length (pendant): 4 ½ in (11.4 cm)

## PROVENANCE

René d'Harnoncourt, New York, acquired by the early 1960s  
Anne d'Harnoncourt, Philadelphia, acquired by descent from the above

Joseph J. Rishel, Philadelphia, acquired by descent from the above

## EXHIBITION

The Museum of Primitive Art, New York, *Two Private Collections: Gertrud A. Mellon and René d'Harnoncourt*, November 29, 1965 - February 11, 1966

## LITERATURE

The Museum of Primitive Art, ed., *Two Private Collections: Gertrud A. Mellon and René d'Harnoncourt*, New York, 1965, n.p., cat. no. 72 (listed)

## CATALOGUE NOTE

Necklaces such as this, known as *lei niho palaoa*, were amongst the most valuable and highly prized of personal ornaments in the vast array of regalia and personal decoration available to the *ali'i*, the Hawaiian nobility. Adrienne Kaeppler has described them as “the most spectacular of all Hawaiian ornaments” (Adrienne L. Kaeppler, *Polynesia: The Mark and Carolyn Blackburn Collection*, Honolulu, 2010, p. 371), and according to David Malo, the Hawaiian historian, they were second in value and prestige only to feathered articles, such as the great cloaks, *‘ahu ‘ula*. Malo notes that the *ali'i* would wear their *lei niho palaoa*, like their cloaks, “in battle or on occasions of ceremony and display” (David Malo, *Hawaiian Antiquities*, Honolulu, 1903, p. 107).

Examples of the hook form pendants retrieved from archaeological contexts are often made of shell, coral, or calcite, amongst other materials, with marine ivory historically only available from beached whales. European and American whalers began to trade with the Hawaiians in earnest in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, bringing large quantities of marine ivory in the form of whale teeth and walrus tusks. The greater availability of this material did not diminish its value amongst the *ali'i*, but rather led to a flourishing in the manufacture of pendants of greater size, drama, and beauty. No distinction whatsoever in value appears to have been drawn between pendants made of whale teeth or walrus tusk, or indeed between *lei niho palaoa* made of these materials and certain rare and unusual examples made from elephant ivory brought from China.

The interpretation of the distinctive shape of *niho palaoa* remains uncertain. According to Cox and Davenport, its curving tongue-like shape represents the ultimate abstraction of the “protruding jaw-mouth-tongue” form found in *‘aumakua* images of family gods or deified ancestors (J. Halley Cox and William H. Davenport, *Hawaiian Sculpture*, Honolulu, 1974, p. 42), a theory which perhaps indicates the genealogical connection between these deities and the aristocratic wearers of *lei niho palaoa*. The Hawaiian historian Lucia

Jensen suggests that the pendants “represent [...] the *ho’aka* (crescent), which [...] symbolized the vessel of *mana*”, or supernatural power (Lucia Jensen cited in Roger G. Rose, *Hawai’i: The Royal Isles*, Honolulu, 1980, p. 196).

The pendant itself is not the only vessel of *mana*. Human hair was considered sacred by Hawaiians, since the head was believed to be *tapu* and therefore captured the *mana* of the person to whom it belonged. The coils of exquisitely finely braided human hair from which the pendants are suspended are thus an equally remarkable and powerful part of these extraordinary objects.

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## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



79

### Stilt Step, Marquesas Islands

Estimate: 4,000 - 6,000 USD

## DESCRIPTION

Property from a Private Collection

Stilt Step, Marquesas Islands

Height: 13 ⅛ in (33.3 cm)

## PROVENANCE

Private Collection, acquired circa 1960

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## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



Works from the Collection of René d'Harnoncourt from the Estate of Joseph J. Rishel

80

### Pounder, Tahiti, Society Islands

Estimate: 2,000 - 3,000 USD



**DESCRIPTION**

Works from the Collection of René d'Harnoncourt from the Estate of Joseph J. Rishel

Pounder, Tahiti, Society Islands

Inscribed in white ink: "N-3-8"

Height: 6 ½ in (16.3 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

René d'Harnoncourt, New York, acquired on Long Island, New York, in 1944

Anne d'Harnoncourt, Philadelphia, acquired by descent from the above

Joseph J. Rishel, Philadelphia, acquired by descent from the above

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## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



Works from the Collection of René d'Harnoncourt from the Estate of Joseph J. Rishel

81

### Large Vessel, Tahiti, Society Islands

Estimate: 8,000 - 12,000 USD

**DESCRIPTION**

Works from the Collection of René d'Harnoncourt from the Estate of Joseph J. Rishel

Large Vessel, Tahiti, Society Islands

Length: 32 ¼ in (81.9 cm); Width: 24 ⅝ in (62.6 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

René d'Harnoncourt, New York, acquired by the early 1960s  
Anne d'Harnoncourt, Philadelphia, acquired by descent from the above

Joseph J. Rishel, Philadelphia, acquired by descent from the above

**EXHIBITION**

The Museum of Primitive Art, New York, *Two Private Collections: Gertrud A. Mellon and René d'Harnoncourt*, November 29, 1965 - February 11, 1966

**LITERATURE**

The Museum of Primitive Art, ed., *Two Private Collections: Gertrud A. Mellon and René d'Harnoncourt*, New York, 1965, n.p., cat. no. 71 (listed; origin given as "Hervey Islands" [Southern Cook Islands])

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## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



Property from a Private Collection, New York

82

### Two Clubs, Tonga

Estimate: 2,000 - 3,000 USD

**DESCRIPTION**

Property from a Private Collection, New York

Two Clubs, Tonga

Length: 32 in (81.3 cm), and 34 7/8 in (88.6 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

European Private Collection

Sotheby's, Paris, *Art Africain, Océanien et Précolombien*

[...] *Collection privée Européenne*, April 16, 2003, lot 164,

consigned by the estate of the above

Private Collection, New York, acquired at the above auction

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## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



83

### Pounder, Palau

Estimate: 3,000 - 5,000 USD

## DESCRIPTION

Pounder, Palau

Fossilized coral rock

Height: 5 7/8 in (15 cm)

## PROVENANCE

European Private Collection

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## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



84

### Pounder, Pulap Atoll, Caroline Islands

Estimate: 4,000 - 6,000 USD

## DESCRIPTION

Pounder, Pulap Atoll, Caroline Islands

Fossilized coral rock

Height: 5 7/8 in (15 cm)

## PROVENANCE

European Private Collection

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## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



Works from the Collection of René d'Harnoncourt from the Estate of Joseph J. Rishel

85

### Kanak Bird-Head Club, New Caledonia

Estimate: 1,000 - 1,500 USD

**DESCRIPTION**

Works from the Collection of René d'Harnoncourt from the Estate of Joseph J. Rishel

Kanak Bird-Head Club, New Caledonia

Length: 28 ¼ in (71.8 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

Darthea Speyer, Paris

René d'Harnoncourt, New York, acquired as a gift from the above in 1954

Anne d'Harnoncourt, Philadelphia, acquired by descent from the above

Joseph J. Rishel, Philadelphia, acquired by descent from the above

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## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



Works from the Collection of René d'Harnoncourt from the Estate of Joseph J. Rishel

86

### War Club, Malaita, Solomon Islands

Estimate: 800 - 1,200 USD

**DESCRIPTION**

Works from the Collection of René d'Harnoncourt from the Estate of Joseph J. Rishel

War Club, Malaita, Solomon Islands

Length: 32 ¾ in (83.2 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

René d'Harnoncourt, New York, acquired by the early 1960s  
Anne d'Harnoncourt, Philadelphia, acquired by descent from the above

Joseph J. Rishel, Philadelphia, acquired by descent from the above

**EXHIBITION**

The Museum of Primitive Art, New York, *Two Private Collections: Gertrud A. Mellon and René d'Harnoncourt*, November 29, 1965 - February 11, 1966

**LITERATURE**

The Museum of Primitive Art, *Two Private Collections: Gertrud A. Mellon and René d'Harnoncourt*, New York, 1965, n.p., cat. no. 66 (listed)

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## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



Property from the Collection of Jerry and Ilene Liebowitz

87

### Figure of a Supernatural Being, Nendö (Santa Cruz), Santa Cruz Islands, Solomon Islands

Estimate: 15,000 - 25,000 USD



## DESCRIPTION

Property from the Collection of Jerry and Ilene Liebowitz

Figure of a Supernatural Being, Nendö (Santa Cruz), Santa Cruz Islands, Solomon Islands

Height: 6 ¾ in (16.2 cm)

## PROVENANCE

Deacon Clement Daagi, acquired in the village of Nea, Nendö, in 1958

William H. Davenport, Philadelphia, acquired from the above in 1959

Christie's, London, November 28, 1984, lot 90, consigned by the above

William A. McCarty-Cooper, New York, acquired at the above auction

Christie's, New York, *Important Tribal Art and Antiquities from the Collection of William A. McCarty-Cooper*, 19 May 1992, lot 27, consigned by the estate of the above

Jerry and Ilene Liebowitz, Fort Lee, New Jersey, acquired at the above auction

## LITERATURE

William H. Davenport, "Lyric Verse and Ritual in the Santa Cruz Islands", *Expedition*, Vol. 18, No. 1, 1975, p. 46

Allan Hanson and Louise Hanson, eds., *Art and Identity in Oceania*, Honolulu, 1990, p. 100, fig. 9.4

William H. Davenport, *Santa Cruz Island Figure Sculpture and Its Social and Ritual Contexts*, Philadelphia, 2005, pp. 212-213, pl. 52

## CATALOGUE NOTE

The figurative sculpture of Nendö, or Santa Cruz Island, in the eastern Solomon Islands, is comprised of a small corpus of fifty or so sculptures that "resemble the human body, and [which] can be categorized as sacred icons that depict deities [*dukna*] or other supernatural beings in the religious and mythic domains of Nendö culture." (William H. Davenport, *Santa Cruz Island Figure Sculpture and Its Social and Ritual Contexts*, Philadelphia, 2005, p. 1).

The present figure was formerly in the collection of the anthropologist William H. Davenport, who over the course of several decades spent considerable time on Nendö. He was given this figure in 1959 by Deacon Clement Daagi of the Anglican Melanesian Mission, who informed him that it represents a *leimuba*, a benevolent type of supernatural being which lives in seclusion deep in the rainforest. Davenport records that "Humans could never find [*leimuba*] even if they tried." The *leimuba* are "shrouded in mystery. They cannot be summoned by prayer, but individual *leimuba* might suddenly appear to a human and bestow a good luck token of some kind or possibly a roll of valuable red-feather money, then, just as suddenly, disappear." (*ibid.*, p. 14).

The *leimuba*'s benevolent character is reflected in the delightful style of this charming object, which is itself the type of token or charm that a *leimuba* might deliver to a deserving mortal. The diminutive, round-headed supernatural is richly attired, with a finely woven loincloth, beaded anklets, and other ornaments, including a small shell which represents a conch, "a symbol of renown, because wealthy and important men (and supernaturals are these even more than mortals) are associated with the blowing of a conch which always announces the purchase of valuable commodities." (William H. Davenport, "Lyric Verse and Ritual in the Santa Cruz Islands", *Expedition*, Vol. 18, No. 1, p. 46). All *leimuba* are thought to be male, "and no one is certain whether there are females or whether they reproduce and whether they are immortal like *dugna*" (William H. Davenport, *Santa Cruz Island Figure Sculpture [...]*, Philadelphia, 2005, p. 15). Davenport states, "Santa Cruz

men deny that male carvers ever made images of the *leimuba*; all tokens received from *leimuba* are believed to have been fabricated by them.” (*ibid.*, p. 212).

The surface of this sculpture was once covered in turmeric, which the people of Nendö believed contained supernatural properties, and which was ritually applied to “sacred objects in order to sacralize them.” (*ibid.*, p. 11). Although figures of tutelary deities, or *munga dukna*, were venerated on altars, a figure of a supernatural *leimuba* such as this would have been kept hidden in a secret place “until the owner wished to use it or speak to it, hoping to attract the attention of a *leimuba* who might make him a present of feather currency.” (*ibid.*, p. 212).

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## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



Works from the Collection of René d'Harnoncourt from the Estate of Joseph J. Rishel

88

### Platter, Efate, Vanuatu

Estimate:1,000 - 1,500 USD

**DESCRIPTION**

Works from the Collection of René d'Harnoncourt from the Estate of Joseph J. Rishel

Platter, Efate, Vanuatu

The reverse with a paper label with a typewritten inscription: "d'H. 215.61"

Length: 32 1/8 in (81.6 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

René d'Harnoncourt, New York, acquired by the early 1960s  
Anne d'Harnoncourt, Philadelphia, acquired by descent from the above

Joseph J. Rishel, Philadelphia, acquired by descent from the above

**EXHIBITION**

The Museum of Primitive Art, New York, *Two Private Collections: Gertrud A. Mellon and René d'Harnoncourt*, November 29, 1965 - February 11, 1966

**LITERATURE**

The Museum of Primitive Art, ed., *Two Private Collections: Gertrud A. Mellon and René d'Harnoncourt*, New York, 1965, n.p., cat. no. 68 (listed)

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## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



Property from an Important East Coast Collection

89

### Abelam Figure, Prince Alexander Mountains, East Sepik Province, Papua New Guinea

Estimate: 6,000 - 9,000 USD

**DESCRIPTION**

Property from an Important East Coast Collection

Abelam Figure, Prince Alexander Mountains, East Sepik  
Province, Papua New Guinea

Height: 43 in (109.2 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

George Kennedy, Los Angeles, collected *in situ* in the 1960s  
Christie's, Los Angeles, February 14, 1981, lot 68, consigned by  
the estate of the above

Norman Lear, Los Angeles, acquired at the above auction  
Sotheby's, New York, November 19, 1999, lot 178, consigned by  
the above

Acquired at the above auction

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## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



Property from an Important East Coast Collection

90

### Bark Belt, Gulf of Papua, Gulf Province, Papua New Guinea

Estimate: 1,500 - 2,500 USD



**DESCRIPTION**

Property from an Important East Coast Collection

Bark Belt, Gulf of Papua, Gulf Province, Papua New Guinea

Width: 12 5/8 in (32.1 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

Anthony J. P. Meyer, Galerie Meyer, Paris  
Acquired from the above in October 1998

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## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



Works from the Collection of René d'Harnoncourt from the Estate of Joseph J. Rishel

91

### Mask, Coastal Sepik River, East Sepik Province, Papua New Guinea

Estimate: 1,000 - 1,500 USD

## DESCRIPTION

Works from the Collection of René d'Harnoncourt from the Estate of Joseph J. Rishel

Mask, Coastal Sepik River, East Sepik Province, Papua New Guinea

Height: 11 1/8 in (28.3 cm)

## PROVENANCE

René d'Harnoncourt, New York, acquired as a gift in 1945 from "Louis", probably Louis Pierre Ledoux, New York  
Anne d'Harnoncourt, Philadelphia, acquired by descent from the above  
Joseph J. Rishel, Philadelphia, acquired by descent from the above

## EXHIBITION

The Museum of Modern Art, New York, *Art of the South Seas*, January 29 - May 19, 1946  
The Museum of Primitive Art, New York, *Two Private Collections: Gertrud A. Mellon and René d'Harnoncourt*, November 29, 1965 - February 11, 1966

## LITERATURE

The Museum of Primitive Art, *Two Private Collections: Gertrud A. Mellon and René d'Harnoncourt*, New York, 1965, n.p., cat. no. 64 (listed)

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## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



Works from the Collection of René d'Harnoncourt from the Estate of Joseph J. Rishel

92

### Hand Club, Guyana

Estimate: 600 - 900 USD

**DESCRIPTION**

Works from the Collection of René d'Harnoncourt from the Estate of Joseph J. Rishel

Hand Club, Guyana

Inscribed in white ink: "N-3-47"

Length: 15 1/8 in (38.4 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

René d'Harnoncourt, New York, acquired by the early 1960s  
Anne d'Harnoncourt, Philadelphia, acquired by descent from the above

Joseph J. Rishel, Philadelphia, acquired by descent from the above

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## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



Works from the Collection of René d'Harnoncourt from the Estate of Joseph J. Rishel

93

### Two Goannas (Lizards), Groote Eylandt, Australia

Estimate: 2,000 - 3,000 USD

**DESCRIPTION**

Works from the Collection of René d'Harnoncourt from the Estate of Joseph J. Rishel

Two Goannas (Lizards), Groote Eylandt, Australia

circa 1960

Length: 36 in (91.4 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

René d'Harnoncourt, New York, acquired by the early 1960s  
Anne d'Harnoncourt, Philadelphia, acquired by descent from the above  
Joseph J. Rishel, Philadelphia, acquired by descent from the above

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## Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

New York | 21 Nov 2022 | 08:00 PM CET



Works from the Collection of René d'Harnoncourt from the Estate of Joseph J. Rishel

94

### The Saw-Fish, Djun-gundagmun, Oenpelli, Western Arnhem Land, Australia

Estimate: 3,000 - 5,000 USD

**DESCRIPTION**

Works from the Collection of René d'Harnoncourt from the Estate of Joseph J. Rishel

The Saw-Fish, Djun-gundagmun, Oenpelli, Western Arnhem Land, Australia

circa 1948

Length: 27  $\frac{3}{4}$  in (70.5 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

Executed at Oenpelli, Western Arnhem Land, during The American-Australian Scientific Expedition to Arnhem Land in 1948

Charles P. Mountford, Adelaide

René d'Harnoncourt, New York, acquired as a gift from the above by the end of the 1940s

Anne d'Harnoncourt, Philadelphia, acquired by descent from the above

Joseph J. Rishel, Philadelphia, acquired by descent from the above

**LITERATURE**

Charles P. Mountford, *Records of the American-Australian Scientific Expedition to Arnhem Land, Vol. 1: Art, Myth and Symbolism*, Melbourne, 1956, p. 254, and p. 261, pl. 83, fig. 3

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